

Friday August 7 1998

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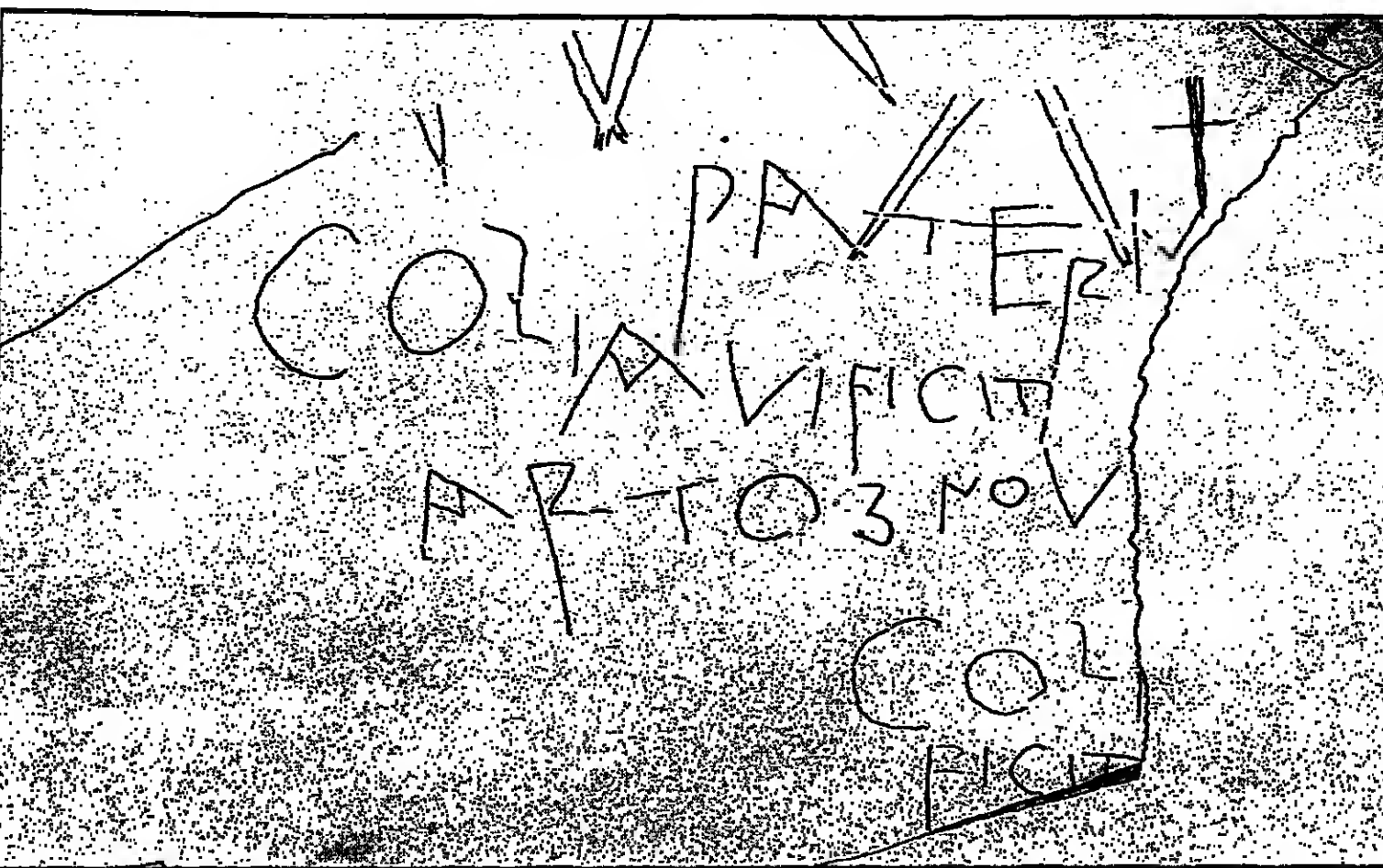
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Decca Aitkenhead

Probation can work

Comment, page 12

Do these markings mean that the legend of King Arthur is now fact?



The newly discovered slate which points to Arthur as a warlord of the Dark Ages and (below) a traditional image of King Arthur. PHOTOGRAPH: SAM MORGAN MOORE

Maev Kennedy on a piece of Cornish slate archaeologists say is the 'find of a lifetime'

Maev Kennedy
Heritage Correspondent

A SMALL piece of slate inscribed with the word "Artogannv" has been found at Tintagel in Cornwall, the traditional birthplace of King Arthur. The stone, described by archaeologists as "the find of a lifetime", is the first scrap of solid evidence ever discovered linking the legendary Arthur with a real man.

The chief archaeologist of English Heritage, Geoffrey Wainwright, described the link between the stone, the legend and Arthur as "inescapable".

The stone has been dated to the sixth century by the style of the inscription and the broken pottery and glass found with it. The archaeologists believe it was originally built into the wall of a house which collapsed, before then being re-used in a sixth century stone drain cover.

The rock island site of the castle is one of the most romantic in Britain and it was on the edge of the cliff overlooking a tavern traditionally known as Merlin's Cave that the stone was

found. Archaeologists have spent much of this century demolishing links between Arthur and the site as legendary. But what has now been found is evidence of a real historical figure on which the myth was built.

Dr Wainwright said yesterday: "There are two Arthurs. King Arthur the myth — Malory, Tennyson, Excalibur, Guinevere, Lancelot — I'm afraid is fiction. But the warlord who lived in the Dark Ages, named as Arthur in later texts, who fought and won battles, was real."

"What we have here is the right time and the right site and the actual name of Artogannv — the coincidence is quite remarkable."

The stone was found on July 4 by a team from Glasgow University led by Chris Morris. It was cleaned and studied at Glasgow before being returned to the site yesterday. One inscription is strongly incised but broken and indecipherable. The other faintly scratched into the stone is mainly in Latin but in post-Roman sixth century script. It reads:

turn to page 2, column 8

Leader comment, page 13



Richard Norton-Taylor

A BBC television Panorama special was blocked by the Government last night, hours before it planned to reveal further details of an alleged plot by MI6 officers to assassinate the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi.

In the latest twist in the growing international row surrounding attempts to gag former MI5 and MI6 officers, government lawyers served the BBC with an injunction preventing it from making new disclosures about the allegations.

The injunction — which the BBC is expected to challenge in the High Court today — followed the breakdown of protracted talks between the corporation's top executives and government officials.

It is understood the investigation by a BBC journalist, Mark Urban, sheds new light on the circumstances surrounding the alleged plot against Col Gaddafi.

The Guardian yesterday published allegations made by David Shayler, the MI5 renegade now locked up in a Paris jail, of an attempt to assassinate the Libyan leader two years ago.

According to Mr Shayler, the failed plot led to the deaths of several bystanders after agents placed the bomb under the wrong car in Col Gaddafi's cavalcade. The agent in charge of the 1996 assassination attempt was alleged to have used a rightwing group in Libya and was paid \$50,000, Mr Shayler says.

The allegations were first published in the New York Times on Tuesday.

The BBC said in a statement last night that it had been investigating for many months suggestions of a plot to murder Col Gaddafi. It said: "Some of the detail of the allegations was covered by an injunction which only the Government or the courts have the power to lift."

The statement added: "On Wednesday in the light of foreign press disclosure of an assassination attempt, the BBC asked the Government to lift the injunction so that the whole story could be told."

The BBC said it was particularly anxious to establish that nothing it proposed to



claim that there was an official plot to kill Gaddafi is untrue."

A spokesman added: "It is inconceivable in normal peacetime circumstances that authority for the secret intelligence services to conduct assassination attempts would be granted."

Officers from MI5 and its sister service, MI6 — the foreign intelligence agency — were said to have been locked in a frantic damage-limitation exercise.

They are deeply concerned about the seepage of further revelations from both Mr Shayler and Richard Tomlinson, a former MI6 officer who this week was served with a gagging injunction in New Zealand.

The Government seems particularly anxious to stop the Panorama programme delving into claims that MI6 officers were involved in an operation against Col Gaddafi. Mr Shayler was arrested in Paris late on Saturday night on an extradition warrant pending prosecution in Britain under the Official Secrets Act.

Mr Tomlinson — who was released from prison this year after being convicted for disclosing secrets — was arrested in Paris the previous day at the request of the police Special Branch. He was later released.

In an interview on New Zealand Television last night, he accused MI6 of acting illegally and of being poorly managed. He said he was determined to write a book. The broadcaster has also been served with an injunction which it says it will fight.

Letters, page 13

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Lewinsky has her five hours in court

Gary Young
in Washington

A GRIM-faced Monica Lewinsky, whose testimony has the power to alter the course of Bill Clinton's presidency, yesterday strode into a federal courthouse in Washington to give over five hours of evidence about exactly what took place between them.

After seven months of rumours, leaks and unsubstantiated allegations, Ms Lewinsky went into the courtroom to admit that she did have sex with the president and that he encouraged her to

keep quiet about it. She gave the evidence to the grand jury in return for full immunity for herself, her mother, and, it emerged, her father.

But she insisted that the president never asked her to lie under oath. Wearing a navy blue suit, a visibly nervous Ms Lewinsky, the 25-year-old former White House intern, was ushered into a side entrance of the courthouse, avoiding the scrum of more than 100 reporters in front.

Following a week of intense preparation by her own legal team and that of the independent prosecutor, Kenneth Starr, Ms Lewinsky was

given a hug by one of her lawyers before disappearing into a lift usually reserved for judges.

"Monica's doing just fine," said Plato Chacheris, one of the Lewinsky lawyers, who helped to clinch full immunity for Ms Lewinsky and her mother, Marcia Lewis, two weeks ago in return for her full and truthful testimony.

Only a few streets away, President Clinton, looking uncharacteristically flustered, stumbled over a speech at an anti-crime event in the Rose Garden of the White House.

In public the president's legal team claimed they

hoped Ms Lewinsky's testimony would mark the beginning of the end of a scandal that has engulfed the presidency for the past seven months.

The view here is that we're hopeful that this means a four-year investigation that has cost upwards of \$40 million is finally coming to a conclusion," said the White House deputy press secretary, Barry Toiv, yesterday.

But privately they are anxious to learn precisely how convincing Ms Lewinsky's testimony is, and how much of it can be backed up with concrete proof. They are particularly keen to know the

results of the FBI forensic examination of a dress, handed over by Ms Lewinsky as part of her immunity agreement.

Mr Starr is also believed to have procured presents the president gave to Ms Lewinsky, taped messages from Mr Clinton on Ms Lewinsky's answer phone, and a signed picture.

In December last year, Ms Lewinsky signed a written affidavit in the Paula Jones sexual harassment case, claiming she did not have a sexual relationship with the president.

President Clinton, who has denied having a sexual relationship with Ms

Lewinsky both under oath and in public, is due to appear before the grand jury, in a live video link-up from the White House, on August 17.

The president has made it clear through his spokesmen that he intends to stand by his story, despite mounting bipartisan pressure for him to confess the affair to the nation in the hope that he will be forgiven.

Opinion polls show that the public would want Mr Starr to call the investigation off if the president came clean on the matter.

Lifetime chained to scandal, page 9

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In Sport98: Derek Potter interviews Macclesfield manager, Sammy McIlroy

Chancellor stands by Treasury forecasts and speaks of 'necessary slowdown' □ Both sides of industry urge early interest rate cut

UK will avoid recession, says Brown

Larry Elliott and Mark Addinson

THE Chancellor, Gordon Brown, last night expressed confidence that the economy is on course to avoid a damaging recession despite pleas from both sides of industry for a cut in interest rates going unheeded at the Bank of England yesterday.

In an interview with the Guardian that coincided with

the Bank's decision to leave the cost of borrowing unchanged at 7.5 per cent, Mr Brown said the economy was witnessing a "justifiable and necessary slowdown" but that he could see no signs that growth would grind to a halt.

"I am confident that we are on track to avoid recession", the Chancellor said, sticking to Treasury forecasts of two per cent growth this year and 1.75 per cent in 1999. "The economy is performing as we expected it to do."

The Bank's decision to

leave interest rates on hold followed accumulating evidence that the downturn in manufacturing — which accounts for a quarter of the economy — is spreading to the service sector.

City analysts now believe that the next move in interest rates will be down following the six increases since Labour came to power — unless the pound goes into free fall on the foreign exchanges over the coming weeks.

The Bank's quarterly analysis of the outlook for inflation

will be published next week, and the City said the failure of the nine-strong Monetary Policy Committee to raise rates suggested that the recent moderation in growth meant the Government was on course to hit its 2.5 per cent target.

"The chances are rates have now peaked... if policy is not on track, this begs the question of why rates have not been changed", said Michael Saunders, UK economist at Salomon Smith Barney.

The Bank's decision was greeted with undisguised relief by both sides of industry, but there was disappointment that the MPC had left the door open for further increases later in the year.

"We urgently need a cut in interest rates or at the very least a clear signal that they have peaked", said Ian Brinkley, senior economist at the TUC. "Otherwise there is a very real danger of a hard landing for the economy."

Ian Peters, deputy director-general of the British Cham-

bers of Commerce, warned that manufacturing industry was dangerously close to the brink of a recession with more job losses and company closures. "In September the MPC must cut rates by a quarter per cent."

The shadow Chancellor, Francis Maude, said that Mr Brown's plans to increase public spending by 2.75 per cent a year for the rest of the parliament was stoking up inflationary pressure.

Rejecting the charge, Mr Brown blamed the need for

the current slowdown on the inflationary legacy inherited from the Tories.

"It was a great pity that the Bank wasn't made independent six to months before the last election, so that we could have avoided the inflationary problems caused by the last Conservative government."

"We have got to move from the short-termism of sports of growth followed by deep recessions to a more steady pattern. I will give the new system all the support it needs."

Declaring that his aim was to break Britain's boom-bust cycle, the Chancellor repeated his warning that a failure to exercise pay moderation could trigger further tough action from the Bank. Looking ahead, he said the challenge for the Government in the next Budget was to take steps to improve Britain's productivity performance, which lags behind most of its major competitors.

Chancellor stands firm, page 15

Probation service to get tough new image

Alan Travis Home Affairs Editor

THE probation service is expected to be re-branded as the Public Protection Service in an attempt to banish its "too tolerant" image as part of the most radical shake-up in its 90-year history, the Home Office announced yesterday.

Probation officers are to lose their key role of "assisting or befriending" offenders as first set out in 1907 in a package designed to ensure that alternatives to prison are seen as rigorous punishments which protect the public.

Home Office officials have already started to talk of developing a national "corrections" policy to cover probation and prisons issues but have rejected this American term for the whole probation service. A plan to merge the prison and probation services has also been rejected.

The Home Office Minister, Lord Williams of Mostyn, said the new name was needed to make it clearer what the organisation did and dispel the impression that people given community sentences were "walking free" from court. Preferred options are the Public Protection Service or the Community Justice Enforcement Agency.

The Civil Service review proposing the shake-up is considering even more cumbersome titles, including the Offender Risk Management Service, the Justice Enforcement and Public Protection Service and even the Napoleonic-sounding Public Safety and Offender Management Service.

It is all a far cry from the 19th century origins of probation officers as "police court missionaries".

The Home Office also intends to rename court orders such as community service and probation orders.

The consultation document published yesterday acknowledges that probation is a long

established concept, but said the terms used were often mistakenly associated with tolerance of crime — probation was seen as a conditional reprieve.

Community service sounded like a voluntary activity while some terms such as "throughcare" were too esoteric to be understood by the public.

Ministers propose to replace the 54 separate locally run probation services with a national agency with 42 areas sharing the same geographical boundaries as the local police and crown prosecution services.

This would end local probation committees and place the service under the "arm-length" management of the Home Office through a Whitehall agency similar to the Prison Service Agency.

The Association of Chief Probation Officers supported the modernisation of the service but warned of the pitfalls of centralisation, and said the name should not be changed without better evidence of the benefits.

"The advantages of a national service will be in giving community sentences greater consistency, a national identity and the possibility of more resources. We would also have a more direct relationship with the Home Secretary," said Harold Lockwood, association chairman.

"The possible pitfalls are that centralisation is often a prelude to top-heavy bureaucracy and encroachment on local control." He said a MORI opinion poll to test the proposed names had shown few of the suggestions were popular.

"Renaming organisations has an unfortunate history and the public is currently very attuned to any whiff of 'spin-doctoring'. They would prefer our reputation to be based on the substance of our work, not a cosmetic makeover," he said.

Decca Aitkenhead, page 12



Michelle De Bruin... expected to appeal against the ban that effectively ends her career. 'Emotionally it's a huge blow'

PHOTOGRAPH BY BILLY STICKLAND

De Bruin banned and branded a cheat

Duncan Mackay and Rory Carroll

MICHELLE De Bruin, the Irish swimmer who as Michelle Smith came from nowhere to claim three Olympic swimming gold medals for Ireland in 1996, was yesterday found guilty by the international swimming governing body of manipulating a drugs test.

It found that she tampered with her urine sample at her home in Kells, Co. Kilkenny, on January 10 by adding whiskey, suggesting an attempt to mask the presence of banned drugs, such as anabolic steroids.

The 28-year-old De Bruin escaped a life ban but the four-year suspension will end her career, ruling her out of the 2000 Sydney Olympics. The

only route left open to De Bruin is to appeal to the Court for Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, who have the power to lift the ban.

She is expected to announce plans to appeal in Dublin today.

The decision has stunned the Irish public, who only two years ago were celebrating the triumph of their first Olympic swimming champion who had spent so long among the shoals of also-rans.

But sceptics felt her astonishing advance so late in her career was too good to be true. The chequered past of De Bruin's Dutch husband and coach Erik De Bruin, a former discus thrower who in 1993 had been banned for four years after a positive drugs test, had added to the suspicion.

Jim McDaid, Ireland's sports minister, said yesterday the decision was a personal tragedy for De Bruin and her family. He was saddened and disappointed but hoped she would be able to clear her name.

Tom Humphries, an Irish Times sports writer whose articles from Atlanta questioning De Bruin's innocence were spiked, said: "It's a very difficult thing for people to read. They invested largely in celebrating in 1996 and reacted furiously to any questions which were asked of her — about how she came about her improvement. Emotionally it's a huge blow. I think people will be disillusioned."

At the Atlanta Olympics, President Bill Clinton rallied to De Bruin's cause, telling her he was full of admiration for her swimming and the

way she had dealt with "all that crap from the media".

Tim Wyatt, president of the Ulster branch of the Irish Amateur Swimming Association, said: "It is very sad and very disappointing. The whole of Irish swimming is undergoing a review at the moment and that will lead to far reaching changes."

"She was swimming a golden girl and now she's tarnished. It is extremely disappointing. I think we will see drug testing increase in profile."

Vast sums of money were predicted from sponsors eager to be associated with a woman from a country with no Olympic-sized 50 metre pool. But the gold medals did not bring the expected riches.

After failing to make herself available for a drugs test in October 1996, she was warned the following Febru-

ary she faced a four-year ban if she missed another test.

De Bruin suffered neck and back injuries in a car accident in Ireland last October which disrupted her training schedule and prompted her to pull out of this year's World Championships in Perth, Australia, where China's swimmers were embroiled in a succession of doping scandals. But when the controversy was at its height in Perth, dope testers called on De Bruin for the out-of-competition test which led to the decision announced yesterday.

De Bruin was the second Olympic gold medalist from Dublin to be banned within two weeks. Last week America's Randy Barnes, the Olympic shot-put champion, was suspended after testing positive for a banned drug for the second time in his career.

Is this the proof that Arthur was real?

continued from page one

Pater Collavitt Artog-nov, which Charles Thomas, an expert on Tintagel and inscriptions of the period, translates as "Artog-nov, father of a descendant of Coll, has had this made, or built."

Professor Morris hopes to return next season to excavate the site where he believes the house from which the stone originally came can be found. It is even possible he may find more of the inscription.

The earliest reference to Arthur dates back to the ninth century and the first association with Tintagel came from the writings of the 12th century Welsh author, Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Most of the best-known legends — of Arthur's tutor Merlin the Magician, his betrayal by Queen Guinevere and his friend Lancelot, the magic sword Excalibur and his death at Avalon — come from Sir Thomas Malory in his 15th century chronicle *Le Morte d'Arthur*, or from Tennyson's 19th century *The Idylls of the King*.

The legend says that Arthur was born at Tintagel after his father King Uther Pendragon raped or seduced Igraine, the lady of the castle he was besieging. One legend has Merlin finding the abandoned baby on the beach below the castle.

Dr Walwright said yesterday that although the first association of Arthur with Tintagel was only recorded in the 12th century, the new link was not to be dismissed. "Arthur fought the English, and won at least 12 battles, but he lost the war and eventually the English took over the country. Undoubtedly memories of him survived in the folk memory and manuscript sources until the 12th century."

The find has caused jubilation in the village, with its Merlin tea rooms and King Arthur's pub. It is still entirely dependent on Arthurian tourism. Gandaif, horn David Strutt and now Arthurian re-enactor, proprietor of the Dragon's Breath shop and parish councillor, said: "This will be a shot in the arm to the community, but the stone must stay here and not in a museum in Truro."

The man who found the stone, Professor Morris, is tremendously excited by the discovery but deeply sceptical about the myth of King Arthur. To him the excitement is that it is the first inscription ever found on a secular site of that date. He is resigned to the fact that this is not how his great discovery will be remembered.

"As the stone came out, when I saw the letters A-R-T, I thought uh-oh..."

Four confused young people trapped inside their own egos

Review

Michael Billington

Happy Savages Lyric Studio, Hammermith

PATRICK Marber has a lot to answer for. The success of *Closer* seems

to be spawning a new genre about the emotional hell of mixed foursomes. But where Marber's play acts as a metaphor for modern isolation, Ryan Craig's *Happy Savages* simply shows us four young people trapped inside their own egos.

First, we meet Ben, an embryonic dramatist working on a play about the Holocaust, and his uneasy partner, Lisa, a

management consultant. Then, we encounter Joe, Ben's best buddy and a divorced lawyer in York, who lives with a hairdresser called Rachel, who arouses her lover by appearing naked except for a leather coat and choker.

But when we learn that Lisa has slept with Joe, it is clear that we are in for an evening of mixed doubles depicting the sexual confusion of modern

youth. Craig's characters are muddled, suffering and confused, but you never feel they represent anything beyond themselves.

When Ben says: "I'm a writer — I need my misery," he simply sounds self-indulgent. Even Joe's addiction to drugs springs out of nowhere and seems a desperate attempt to make the character interesting.

I also wonder if Craig's contemporaries really talk like the people in his play. "You're stoked into me so deeply you've become my condition," says Lisa to Ben, which seems good grounds for parting.

Someone else remarks: "We're just two separate entities sharing a space." Oddly enough the play is never boring. But that is largely because it moves

quickly and because it offers the vague, if unfulfilled, promise of erotic excitement. It also helps that the actors are young and personable.

Much the best is Hermione Gulliford who, stepping to at short notice for Anna Winslet, overcomes Lisa's often impossible lines to present us with a woman who has a modicum of sense. Jack Herbert also does all he can as the putative play-

wright, although I've never met a real dramatist so entirely self-obsessed.

Kris Marshall and Victoria Woodward adequately depict the other couple, who suggest *la dolce vita* has unexpectedly moved from Rome to York. But in the end this play simply makes you aware of how brilliant *Closer* is.

This review appeared in some editions yesterday.

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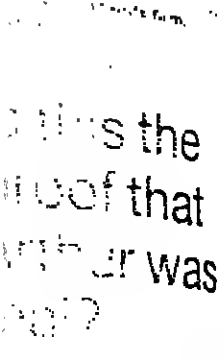
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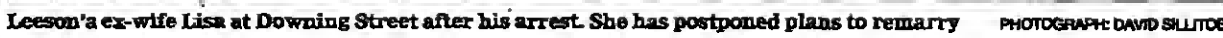
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Is this the
proof that
Arthur was
not?



case in Germany, in an attempt to stand trial in Britain. Before he was sent to Singapore, Leeson had pleaded guilty to two charges of fraud.

British officials in Singapore last night said they had no idea how long it would take for Leeson to be released. "It's difficult to say. I expect in the circumstances the wheels will turn quite quickly," he responded.

The British High Commissioner said Leeson is being visited daily by consular officials, including the Commission's vice-consul, Sue Cronin.

There is no reciprocal prison agreement between Britain and Singapore which would allow Leeson to serve out the rest of his sentence in a British jail.

**David Brindle, Social
Services Correspondent**

Pedal po

Mr Wilson said Castle Morpeth councillors would meet next month to consider their response to the ombudsman's ruling.

Lisa Buckingham
City Editor

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Official view

'Mr Campbell is frequently credited with the ability to manipulate or lean on the press, but the journalists from whom we took evidence were sceptical of anyone's ability to do this ... we were given no clear evidence that Mr Campbell provides some journalists with special treatment'

Minority view

'There has been some concern that the Government's interest in presenting its policy to best advantage sometimes means that it is not announced as it should be, first to Parliament. We note that the Speaker has expressed her concern at the practice of briefing in advance of a ministerial statement to the House ... Mr Campbell in his evidence said in effect that this was not something he could do much about ... we found his evidence on this point unconvincing'



'I do not think there is any wish to politicise the government machine, or to behave improperly'
Sir Richard Wilson, Cabinet Secretary



'If the Prime Minister is the subject of a political attack I am in a position to rebut it'
Alastair Campbell, Press Secretary



'Now we have selective briefing all over the place ... theirs is favouritism which is blatant'
Sir Bernard Ingham, ex-press secretary

Acrimony among MPs over report on role of PM's press spokesman

Tories claim Campbell 'whitewash'

Lucy Ward
Political Correspondent

LABOUR MPs were yesterday scolded by Conservatives of being "glove puppets" of Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's spokesman, as an inquiry into claims of politicisation of the Government's press machine ended in bitter division.

The official report of an investigation by the influential Commons public administration committee was condemned as a "whitewash" by

Tory and Liberal Democrat members, who published an alternative report attacking a "hurring" of the divide between government advisers and civil servants.

The split, which came after the majority Labour members pushed through a series of amendments tuning down the draft document, is the first over any select committee report since Labour took power.

The two reports are almost diametrically opposed, one finding "no clear evidence" that Mr Campbell gives preferential treatment to selected journalists, while the other

calls for a further Commons inquiry into claims of "a sharp growth in pre-briefing" before announcements are made to Parliament.

Tory MP Andrew Tyrie, who moved the draft report, yesterday claimed that Mr Campbell, who gave evidence to the committee, "is not a politically neutral press officer but a hatchet man for the Labour Party". The Tories and Lib Dems called for his salary to be paid from Labour funds.

In a heated press conference, a Tory committee member, David Ruffley, clashed with his Labour counterpart,

Fraser Kemp, claiming Labour members had been "nobbled" by party whips. He said: "The behaviour of Labour members is a disgrace ... They are nothing more than Alastair Campbell's glove puppets. I know that this stitch-up, this cover-up, will be seen through."

The Tories and the one Lib Dem committee member, Mike Hancock, claimed the report had been rushed out, despite their calls for a delay to allow the committee to take evidence from Jack Cunningham, the newly-appointed cabinet "enforcer".

Opposition MPs also lost a

battle to include a recommendation in the report that tapes of Mr Campbell's twice-daily briefings with lobby journalists be kept for a year, rather than a few weeks as at present.

The committee chairman, Labour's Rhodri Morgan, who did not use his casting vote during votes on amendments, said the evidence given to the committee had not supported claims of abuse of taxpayers' money to gain undue preference for party purposes. "That isn't to say some people don't continue to grumble and mumble," he said.

The minority report recom-

mends that political appointees to the Civil Service "who are asked to undertake significant amounts of party political activity should be paid from party funds and not by the taxpayer" - a proposal aimed squarely at Mr Campbell, who is employed under a unique contract enabling him to make political statements while remaining a civil servant.

The official report, meanwhile, proposes the introduction of a code on contacts with the press which would oblige ministers and special advisers to "work closely with the Prime Minister's

official spokesman in particular". That clause, which would effectively strengthen Mr Campbell's arm still further, infuriated opposition committee members.

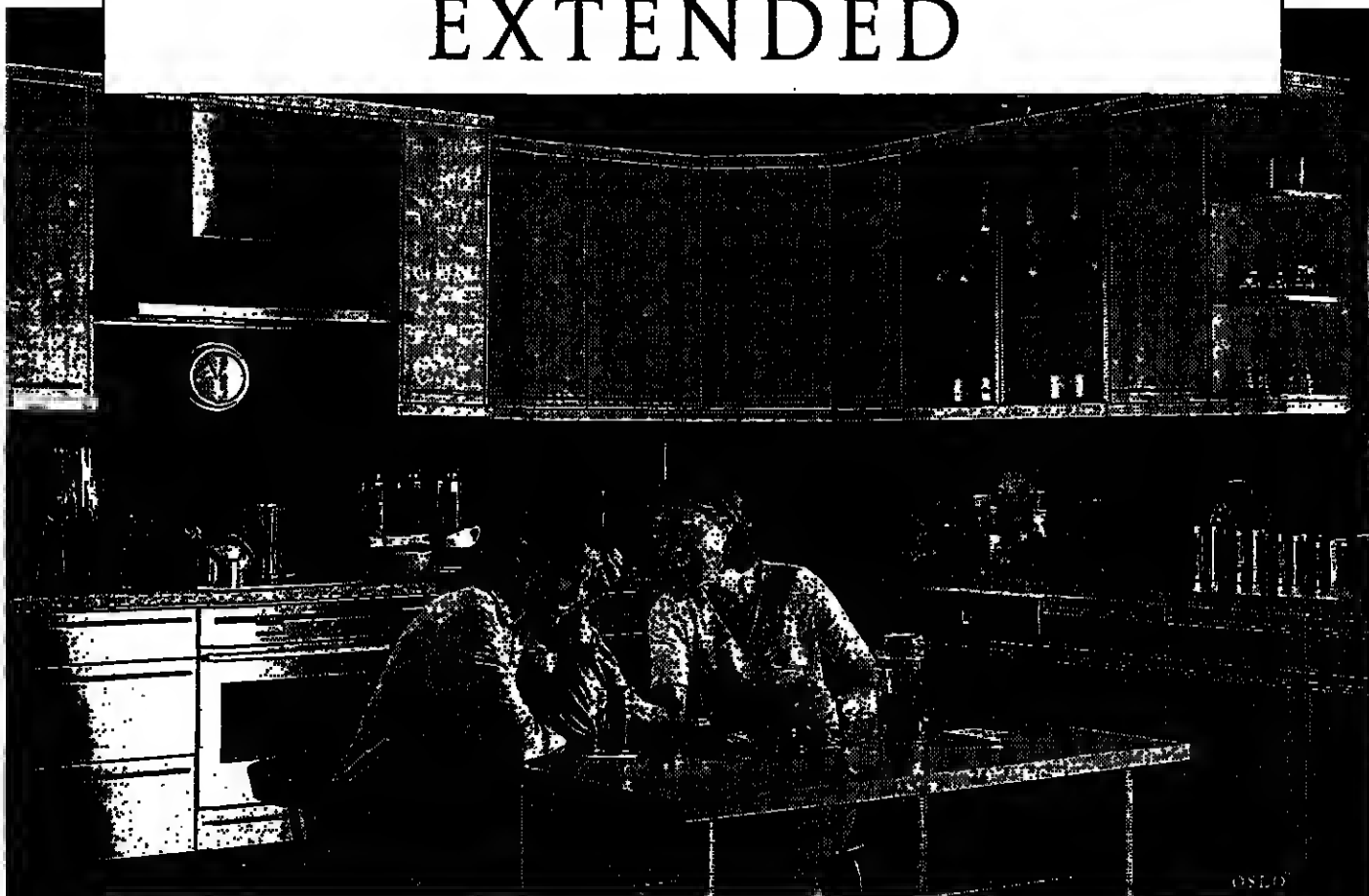
Mr Ruffley said: "We want this man reined in. We want controls put on this political activity". The majority report also tones down criticism of the Strategic Communications Unit, a Downing Street team set up in January to co-ordinate policy presentation across the Government. Mr Tyrie's report suggested the unit "risks giving an advantage to the party in power",

and urges its funding be amended to reflect this.


In the majority report, the MPs simply ask the Government to describe the unit's work and "how it distinguishes between legitimate activity on behalf of the Government and activity which could unduly advantage the party of Government".

Opposition MPs believe the final document also fails adequately to address claims that a series of senior departures from the 1,000-strong Government Information Service have been prompted by government pressure to impose "friendly" replacements.

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Volunteer to sue 'Angel of Mostar'

Nick Hopkins

SHE has been jailed, endured a hunger strike, and survived numerous trips into war zones to help the sick and dying.

But Sally Becker, the aid worker known as the Angel of Mostar, now appears to have another battle on her hands.

A volunteer who joined her on a trip to deliver medicine and clothes to Kosovo on the Albanian border announced yesterday that she intends to sue Ms Becker for negligence.

Mary Banks, one of the 26 volunteers who left England on June 21 for Operation Angel, claimed Ms Becker did not plan the expedition properly and needlessly put her life at risk. She said several members of the team were traumatised by Ms Becker's "stupidity".

The journey involved crossing mountains in an ex-army Leyland Tiger coach packed with supplies. Mrs Banks, from Sheffield, was one of the assigned drivers.

Mrs Banks claims Ms Becker deliberately ignored warnings that the mountain roads were unsuitable for the soft coach. "We were con-

vinced we would not survive the crossing," she said.

"My hands were red raw after driving a coach on a mountain ledge 10,000ft up for 15 hours. The girls in the back were screaming to be shot by snipers because they thought that would be better than going over the edge in a bus. The whole experience was horrendous."

She added: "We didn't mind being injured if we were in a war zone but to die before we got there as so nearly happened was just stupidity. When we complained we were made to feel like wimps."

Mrs Banks, who is in her mid-50s, has contacted a solicitor, who says she has good grounds to seek compensation. She is hoping that at least four other volunteers will support her claim, including Jenny Wheatham, aged 47, from Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex.

Mrs Wheatham said she was so traumatised by the ordeal that she asked to go home. "It was the most harrowing experience of my life. Sally made me pay my own air fare home and made me feel like a coward," she claimed.

Mrs Becker's mercy missions have been criticised by the United Nations High Com-

mission for Refugees. "Her intention of saving women and children and victims of conflict is a noble one, but sometimes she creates more problems than she solves," a UNHCR spokesman said.

However, as word of the proposed legal action spread, other volunteers sprung to Ms Becker's defence.

"Mary is talking nonsense," said Maud Dorn. "She didn't stop moaning from the minute she joined the party. Of course the mission was dangerous, what did she expect?"

Christine Gregory, of North Wales, added: "Nobody got hurt, nobody came off the edge of the mountain and we did succeed in delivering our supplies."

Mike Mendoza, a spokesman for Ms Becker, said 20 volunteers had given Ms Becker whole-hearted support and had asked to join the next mission. "The ladies on the coach were offered space in other vehicles and Sally even offered to drive the coach herself. The coach driver insisted only she should drive it and the women on board refused to leave."

He said the convoy succeeded in delivering vital supplies to hospitals and refugees.



Sally Becker, survivor of many trips to war zones, faces court battle PHOTOGRAPH TIM OCKENEN



The working family tax credit venture
...offers huge bonuses for dishonesty
for both employers and workers.

Frank Field's speech to the Social Market Foundation

Comment, this section page 12

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Genetic crops can aid superweeds, claim scientists

Tim Radford
Science Editor

SCIENTISTS last night confirmed the green campaigner's worst nightmare: genetically-engineered crops can lead to superweeds which shrug off weedkillers.

In a bid to tackle the problem of dealing with weeds using weedkillers which can also destroy crops, genetic engineering has been used to develop crops which can withstand one specific herbicide. In theory, with one spraying, farmers should have weed-free harvests.

But Dr Allison Snow of Ohio state university yesterday told the Ecological Society of America meeting in Baltimore that she and Danish scientists had discovered new evidence that the genes can also spread from crops to weeds — making them just as strong as their ordinary relatives.

The scientists had crossed a herbicide-resistant oilseed rape with a wild relative in laboratory conditions. The theory was that although the resulting weed would inherit the artificial gene, the weed would also produce fewer flowers, or seeds as a result.

But the only difference between the genetically-altered

weed and ordinary weeds lay in the looks, and even that did not last. "By the third generation, the weeds that carried the gene for herbicide resistance looked exactly like normal weeds. The only way to tell them apart was to expose them to herbicide or test their DNA," she said.

The report is a gift for campaigners who want to halt the spread of genetically-altered crops in Europe. A number of field trials in Britain have been disrupted. A genetically-engineered maize produced by Novartis — altered to provide its own pesticide — has been shown to kill "useful" insects as well as crop pests.

The Ohio discovery is not the first to show that crop genes altered by humans can escape into the wild. Cultivated crop plants cannot compete with weeds: they need human help to eliminate the competition, or they perish. The thinking behind genetically-engineered resistance to one particular herbicide has been that the grower could eliminate all the weed competition in a field by spraying.

The calculation was that any accidental hybrids would inherit the vulnerability of the crop parent along with the artificial benefit. It proved wrong. The outcome was the worst of all worlds. The laboratory hybrids had

all the aggressiveness of the weed parents with weedkiller-resistance built in.

Many crops — potatoes, for instance — do not have close relatives co-existing as weeds. Oilseed rape is a member of the brassica family, and wild weed brassicas often grow nearby, which would make it easy for genes to transfer with the pollen. Experiments last year showed that oilseed rape pollen can reach weeds more than a mile away.

"If farmers spray their crops with the same herbicide every year, the only weeds to survive will be the ones with the transgenes — and then the transgenes will spread even faster," Dr Snow said. "That's why the area of crop transgenes is so controversial."

Sue Mayer of Genewatch said: "We've been warning people about these risks and they have been ignored by the regulators. They have continued to license and encourage the development of these crops."

Zeneca, which is pioneering genetically-engineered crops in Britain, said such discoveries were no reason to stop the research. "But we do believe it is imperative that farmers continue to have a wide variety of chemical and mechanical methods available to control weeds."



Adam Barker and Parmin Ras perform Alam Halus in woods behind the Hawth theatre in Crawley, West Sussex, as part of the International Festival of Arts. Alam Halus follows the hero, Bisma, through life and death using fire and water in locations in the woods. PHOTOGRAPH: ROGER BAMBER

Radio 4 revamp lures more listeners

Cold comfort for BBC as other stations lose audiences

Janine Gibson
Media Correspondent

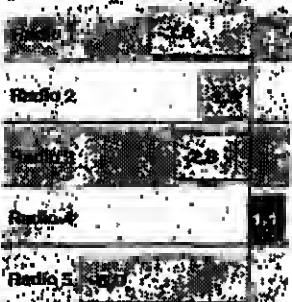
RADIO 4 controller James Boyle was yesterday vindicated in his revamp of the station, which has attracted more listeners, but the news for the rest of BBC radio was far from good.

Radio Joint Audience Research (RAJAR) quarterly figures showed a drop in weekly audience for all BBC stations except Radio 4 — which added 100,000 listeners between April and June, taking its total to 8.3 million.

Mr Boyle's cautiously received schedule, which began in April, has been less than a total success, however. Although more people are sampling the station, they are on average listening for half an hour less each week.

Yesterday Mr Boyle declared the revamp to have had a good start. "I said it was to gain long-term benefits, not

Making waves
% change in weekly audience, 1st quarter to 2nd quarter 1998



a short-term quick fix," he said.

Radio 1, while still the most listened to network with an audience of 9.4 million a week, continued its decline, losing nearly 365,000, about 4 per cent. The audience for the all-important breakfast show, in which Zoe Ball and Kevin Greening take on Virgin Radio's Chris Evans and posse, dropped by 264,000 to 4.5 million. Evans increased his figure by a modest 62,000 to 2.5 million.

BBC Radio's biggest success story of recent years, Radio 5 Live, had a troublesome quarter, despite its World Cup coverage. The audience fell by more than 300,000 to 5.2 million, down 6

per cent, but a spokeswoman denied that the figures meant an overall decline. "Radio 5 is seasonal. It always drops in this quarter because there's no Premier League football," she said, adding that its reach had increased by 300,000 compared with last year.

Radio 2 suffered a decline of nearly 2 per cent, to 8.8 million listeners. Troubled Radio 3, which has just lost controller Nicholas Kenyon, lost 100,000 listeners, dropping below 2.6 million and becoming the least listened to national radio station.

The BBC's figures look poor beside those of some key national rivals in a quarter in which commercial radio took 51.1 per cent of all listening.

Talk Radio recorded a huge climb of nearly 14 per cent, with 300,000 extra listeners taking its total to 2.6 million. It attributed the gain to its new breakfast show, presented by Kirsty Young, and Scott O'Grady's morning show. Managing director Paul Robinson also credited the station's World Cup programming, which attracted more young male listeners.

Radio 3's great rival, Classic FM, achieved its highest listening figures, although the increase was tiny. After crossing the 6 million audience threshold earlier this year, it sustained it with a 21,000 rise last quarter.

Des Lynam smooth talks his way into Radio 2 drive-time

AS SILVER of tongue as he is of hair, Des Lynam (right) has been the thinking woman's crumpet for some time, but he will confirm his place in middle England's hearts in October by taking on the prestigious drive-time slot on Radio 2, writes Janine Gibson.

DJ Des will host a two-hour music and chat show on Friday evenings between 5 and 7 pm, taking over the slot from a Radio 2 veteran, John Dunn, who is retiring.

A Radio 2 spokeswoman said yesterday: "It's really a chance to wind down with Des for the weekend." The BBC's star sports commentator, who began in local radio and even presented Radio 4's Today for a brief period, said yesterday: "Radio is my first love, this is where I started. Jim Mair — who runs Radio 2 — made me an offer I couldn't refuse and he promised me



some money as well." Modestly, he added: "Besides, I am getting pretty enough for radio."

The Match of the Day anchorman has broadened his ambitions of late. Paid tribute to in Arthur Smith's drama, My Summer with Des, he even did a Right Guard commercial poking fun at his cool and dry image.

The format of the show, which starts on October 9, has yet to be decided, but it will feature music, chat and guests of the sporting and non-sporting variety. From Monday to Thursday, the Radio 2 drive-time show will be presented by Johnnie Walker.

Parents warned over children left in cars

Geoffrey Gibbs

PARENTS were warned yesterday about the dangers of leaving their children unattended in cars after an inquest heard how a 23-month-old girl died after being left strapped in her seat for three hours on a day when the temperature topped 70F.

Martha Daniels was found lifeless and frothing at the mouth by her mother who had been doing some cleaning work in a house nearby.

Sarah Daniels, aged 24, of Litcham, Norfolk, wept as she told the inquest how she left her home last September to drive to a house in Spore where she had a regular job.

She parked the car at the back of the house, leaving Martha awake and strapped in her car seat, and wound down the driver's window to allow air into the vehicle.

She told the court she started work at around 8.30am and looked out of the window at 20 minute intervals to check on Martha. At about 9am she noticed that Martha had fallen asleep.

Mrs Daniels was too distressed to tell the hearing what she found on returning to the car after finishing her work at about 11.30am.

But in a statement given to police shortly after Martha's death, she said she could see white froth coming from her daughter's mouth.

In her statement, read to the court by coroner, Oliver Frankl, Mrs Daniels told police: "I opened the car door and unstrapped her from the car seat but she seemed lifeless. I called her name constantly but there was no response."

'Just don't leave your child in the car, and you'll avoid terrible consequences'

Her eyes were closed, her skin felt sweaty and her hair was damp from the sweat.

"I re-strapped her into the car seat and drove her as quickly as possible to my own doctor's surgery."

The inquest, at Dereham, Norfolk, heard that Martha was examined at the surgery by John Martin who pronounced her dead.

Pathologist Virginia Sams, who carried out the post mortem on Martha's body said that there was no evidence as to what Martha's temperature had been when she arrived at the doctor's surgery or what the temperature had been inside the car. She had been forced to conclude that the cause of death was not ascertainable.

Dr Sams told the court how studies showed that the human body temperature rose by one degree per hour if it was not allowed to lose heat in the normal way and that child seats tended to have the effect of making youngsters hot.

The coroner recorded an open verdict. After the hearing police warned about the dangers of leaving children inside cars without adequate ventilation.

A spokesman for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, added: "There is always the potential for accidents. Children can pretend to be drivers, take the hand-brake off, or parents might accidentally leave keys in the ignition. The consequences can be appalling. There have also been many cases of cars being stolen with babies in the back seat. The message is just don't leave your child in the car, and you will avoid terrible consequences."

Scientists link birth defects to landfill sites

Sarah Bosley
Health Correspondent

WOMEN who live within three kilometres of hazardous waste landfill sites have a 33 per cent higher risk of having babies with birth defects than those living further away, says a study in the Lancet.

The researchers, led by Helen Dolk from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, considered this increased risk to be "small but significant".

The health problems which occurred most often in the babies born to families close to waste dumps were neural tube defects, such as spina bifida, holes in the heart and artery malformations. But the authors say they cannot establish whether toxic waste is the cause of the defects, and call for more surveillance of the impact of dumps.

Dr Dolk and colleagues looked at data on birth malformations close to 21 toxic waste sites in five countries. Their study included 1,088 women whose babies had birth defects and 2,386 whose babies did not. All the women lived within seven kilometres of a landfill site.

They found that those who lived closest — within three kilometres — were 33 per cent more likely to have babies with defects.

But both the authors, and in a separate commentary on the research, Goran Pershagen from the Institute of Environmental Medicine in Stockholm, Sweden, pointed out that there is no conclusive

evidence that the defects are caused by toxic chemicals from the sites.

Dr Dolk and colleagues say they do not think there is a socioeconomic explanation, but there are other possible confounding factors. There could be other sources of toxicity nearby, or the mothers could have jobs at industrial sites with high health risks. It is also not possible to say what chemicals could be responsible, because landfill sites contain a mixture and record keeping was not always complete.

But it is also possible, they say, that the numbers of babies with defects could be underestimated, because 25 per cent of women move house during pregnancy.

Professor Pershagen says the results are difficult to interpret. There is little information about chemicals being emitted from sites. "It is not even clear that the study populations are excessively exposed to toxic agents originating from the landfills."

But more studies were needed. "Most studies on risk factors in the environment show only modest relative risks, but these effects may still be important from a public health perspective."

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John Ezard on a £40m bonanza for those following in the footsteps of (from left) Coleridge, Conrad, Joyce and Lawrence



Winnie the Pooh buyout promises struggling writers a taste of honey

A LITTLE-known writers' charity which has for more than 200 years struggled to give small sums to destitute authors is excitedly looking forward to a £40 million bonanza.

Within six months the windfall is likely to flow into the Royal Literary Fund from the Disney organisation, which is negotiating to buy out the last 27 years of copyright for A A Milne's Pooh stories.

The fund is one of the Milne estate's five beneficiaries. The others are Westminster School, Milne's descendants, the descendants of his illustrator, E H Shepherd, and the Garrick Club in London — where some of the 1,300 members are campaigning for a payout of £39,000 each.

For writers starving in garrets over word processors, the prospect is slightly less rosy. The best they can expect is pounds from heaven, rather than the pennies they used to get. "It isn't going to be champagne and caviar all round — absolutely not," the fund's senior treasurer, literary agent Peter Jansen-Smith said yesterday.

"But it does mean that there will be more people we can help. There are a lot of authors now who are out of fashion. We will be able to make their later years a little more comfortable."

Another trustee, Kate Poole, who represents the Society of Authors said, "Anything that helps is wonderful. This is a very tough time for authors who used to make a living out of writing. Their market is vanishing."

The fund, which has the Queen as patron, was founded in 1702 after a classical translator, Floyer Sydenham, died in a debtor's prison. One of its earlier gifts was £20 to the poet Samuel Coleridge.

Among later writers to benefit were Thomas Love Peacock, Thomas Hood, Richard Jefferies, Joseph Conrad and D H Lawrence. In 1915 James Joyce, author of *Ulysses*, was awarded a pension. Present-day grants are anonymous.

Five years ago, the fund's income from Milne royalties began to rise as filming increased. Last year this reached £2 million, dwarfing the second highest benefactor, the Somerset Maugham estate, which yielded £78,000.

The fund, with £9 million in the bank, was able to give nearly £1.2 million in grants and pensions. It helped 152 writers, 41 of them pensioners. The average grant was £5,000, the average pension £5,300.

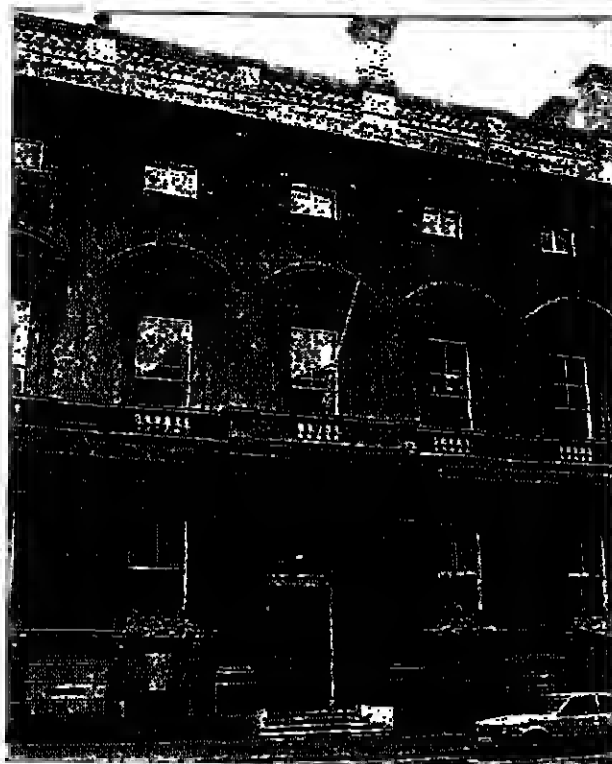
Mr Jansen-Smith said he was optimistic that the Disney deal would go through. "This is a good thing for us because in 10 years the stories might lose popularity and the present yearly income might have dropped."

"It's a bit exaggerated to call it mega-bucks for authors. We may now be able to help some writers to retain their libraries, rather than have to sell them to raise money."

The Garrick Club's managing committee has set up a charitable fund to spend the Pooh windfall. One member, the ex-Tory chancellor, Lord Lamont, has called for a payout.

"I feel a little like Winnie the Pooh when asked if he would like honey or jam, replied he would like both — and without the bread."

But another member, Douglas Matthews, retired London Library librarian, who is also a Royal Literary Fund trustee, said, "It would be entirely improper to give this money to Garrick members. It is surely not what Milne intended."



Garrick Club: some members want £39,000 payout

News in brief

Hospital cleared over stabbing by patient

AN INQUIRY has cleared psychiatric hospital staff of blame for a patient who walked out and stabbed a baby in the street.

Malcolm Calladine, aged 40, who had been in institutions since he was five, eluded staff at Highbury hospital in Nottingham in January 1987, bought a knife in the city centre, and stabbed 17-month-old Ashleigh Baker in the stomach as she sat in a pram. She recovered after emergency surgery.

A Nottingham health authority inquiry, headed by Michael Gunn, a professor at De Montfort university, Leicester, said the incident could not have been predicted or prevented. But, the report concluded, with the benefit of hindsight, communications between staff, and between staff and police, and risk assessments of patients could have been better.

A judge sent Calladine to a top security hospital after he was found unfit to plead to attempted murder. — Helen Carter

Baby deaths scandal for TV

A TELEVISION dramatisation of the heart operation scandal at Bristol royal infirmary, in which 29 babies died, is under discussion with Channel 4.

Following a General Medical Council inquiry, a surgeon and a former chief executive were ordered to be struck off, and another surgeon was banned from operating on children for three years. A public inquiry is expected next year. United Productions, which is preparing a 90-minute script, said: "We have a close relationship with the families. Our dramatisation will cover issues the GMC inquiry refused to deal with."

Crew eject as jet crashes

AN RAF Hawker Hunter jet burst into flames after overshooting the runway at RAF Boscombe Down in Wiltshire yesterday.

Both pilot and navigator ejected at near ground level but escaped serious injury; a helicopter from the base flew them to hospital in Salisbury where last night they remained under observation.

The T7 Hunter, a two-seater trainer version of the obsolete fighter, was destroyed in the fire. It was one of three used as testbeds for new weapons and navigation systems evaluated at Boscombe Down.

MP to defend court case

FIONA JONES, aged 41, Newark's first Labour MP, was yesterday committed for trial next month at Nottingham crown court over allegations of making a false declaration of general election expenses. Also before a Nottingham magistrate was her agent, Desmond Whitcher, aged 73, charged with the same offence.

After the hearing Mrs Jones said she and her agent would "vigorously defend" their actions and show that neither of them had attempted to make an inaccurate return.

Girl aged 15 missing

POLICE were last night continuing to search for a girl aged 15 with a mental age of five who has been missing for more than 24 hours. A squad of 15 officers was searching the Newton Aycliffe area of south Durham where Rebecca Morton was last seen leaving her home at Wednesday lunchtime to go to the shops.

Police appealed for anyone who had seen her to contact them: "There was no obvious reason for Rebecca to have gone missing and she was not a girl who would have easily been led astray by strangers."

Football strip at cut prices

TESCO said yesterday it would continue selling the new Manchester United strip, the 13th in five years, at a quarter of the recommended price. David Sawley, the supermarket chain's corporate affairs manager, said: "Umbraco are as mad as wags in a jam jar. They could sue us, but we are going to carry on for as long as we can."

He said Tesco would also sell Liverpool kit, and other Premiership strips as the season went on.

Field berates Brown's 'fraud' scheme

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

FRANK FIELD, the former social services minister, renewed his attack on Gordon Brown last night when he portrayed one of the Chancellor's pet projects as an inducement to fraud.

Mr Field, who resigned from the Government last week, criticised Mr Brown's working family tax credit as threatening to pull "employees into a spider's web of dishonesty and corruption".

The Government, conscious that Mr Field could be a nuisance with his welfare criticism, organised a campaign at the weekend aimed at undermining him.

The Chancellor outlined plans for the US-style tax credit scheme last year, and the Treasury hopes to have it up and running next year. Supporters say the tax credit sharpens work incentives: those on low pay become eligible for tax rebates.

Mr Field, in his speech last night to the Social Market Foundation in London, said the working family tax credit "is fraught with great dangers". He listed these as:

- it offers huge bonuses for dishonesty;
- it strengthens the employers' hold over work people — these are "the conditions, cheat, and both of us will be better off";
- it rewards employers paying low wages;
- it takes pressure off

Working family tax credit is threatening to pull employees 'into a spider's web of dishonesty and corruption'

Frank Field (right)



improving productivity and, thereby, the scope for increasing real wages.

Mr Field pointed his finger at Mr Brown when he made a Commons resignation statement last week, accusing the Chancellor of blocking his proposed welfare reforms.

The former social services minister, who was given the task by Mr Blair of "thinking

the unthinkable", favoured an increase in the value of basic benefits while cutting down on fraud.

He said the working family tax credit could work if people were honest, but that was unlikely because employers could persuade workers "of the benefits of a very low wage which entitles them to maximum workers family tax credit with perhaps major cash payments on top of this fraud-determined minimum wage."

"Such an outcome is not, unfortunately, that uncommon, if the fraud officers with whom I talked recently are reporting correctly their findings — and there is no reason whatsoever to believe otherwise. A not uncommon tale is of a few thousand pounds put

through the books for tax and national insurance, yet many more thousands of pounds drawn from the bank which the employer, for some reason, cannot explain its purpose."

Mr Field, who opposes additional means testing, sees the scheme as a "major extension in means testing to the working poor". The alternative to a means testing approach had to be spelled out and "that is the primary reason I have returned to the back benches". He said the Government had crossed the means test Rubicon in two important respects — the working families tax credit, and offering a pension guarantee to older pensioners.

Gordon's fatal flaw, page 12

Claire Campbell, who hid her drug use from her parents and later died in hospital. They have urged other families to look for the tell-tale signs in their children and get help before it is too late



Father's plea as woman dies after injecting heroin

Helen Carter

A YOUNG woman died after injecting heroin in the week the Government warned that use of the drug among teenagers had reached epidemic proportions.

The family of Claire Campbell, aged 21, had no idea she was using the drug until she collapsed at the weekend at the home she shared with her boyfriend in Haywards Heath, West Sussex. She was unconscious for three days in the town's Princess Royal hospital and died on Tuesday.

Yesterday Harry Campbell said his daughter, nicknamed Dinky, had hidden her drug use from them. "She was outgoing but she was easily influenced and fell in with the wrong company. A couple of weeks ago her twin sister Ingrid said she was very worried about her. They had been very close since they were little girls but Ingrid saw the people Dinky was with and decided she wasn't doing anything to do with them."

When she was confronted by her parents' accusations that she had been taking drugs, Ms Campbell denied it and told them not to worry.

Mr Campbell, a retired businessman, said his daughter had taken cannabis when she was at sixth form college. "She had promised us she was having nothing more to do with drugs and we be-

lieved her," he said. "Only two or three weeks ago my wife Turid took her shopping and said how happy she was that she had left all that behind her."

"She was bright and enthusiastic, telling her mother how much she had enjoyed herself."

The Home Office report released this week said that more than a third of teenagers experimenting with heroin were under 16 and it was being sold aggressively to a new, young market as another recreational drug.

Mr Campbell said his daughter had lost jobs as a legal secretary and a receptionist because of her absenteeism. "We now know that it was probably all to do with the effects of drug taking but

her telling us there was an ambulance at the house and Dinky was being taken to hospital," he said.

"We were just about to have dinner but we dropped everything and raced to her bedside. We stayed with her until doctors said they could not save her and she died."

"Nothing can bring Dinky back to us and all we can hope now is that other families can learn from this tragedy and do not have to suffer the anguish."

'All we can hope now is that other families can learn from this tragedy and do not have to suffer the anguish'

we had no idea what the problem was, at the time she disguised it so well."

Last week when he and his wife visited her they noticed her dilated pupils and her slow speech, but thought she had been taking sleeping tablets prescribed by her doctor.

"She said she was coming home at the weekend but instead we got a phone call from the woman in the flat below

her telling us there was an ambulance at the house and Dinky was being taken to hospital," he said.

"We were just about to have dinner but we dropped everything and raced to her bedside. We stayed with her until doctors said they could not save her and she died."

"Nothing can bring Dinky back to us and all we can hope now is that other families can learn from this tragedy and do not have to suffer the anguish."

He urged parents to look for the tell-tale signs — sudden and inexplicable mood changes, unnatural behaviour, dilated pupils and slurred speech — and get help before it is too late.

Detective Sergeant Steve Tiffin, of Sussex police, said: "We are interviewing a lot of people in the area who may have information about Claire's death and where she got the drugs from."

"Her family are devastated by their loss. Her parents want her story to be highlighted so it doesn't happen to anyone else's daughter."

Drumcree 'could split Church'

Rory Carroll

THE poisonous impact of the Drumcree stand-off on Northern Ireland's Protestants has enveloped the Church of Ireland and could crack it apart by next July, its official magazine has said.

Holding another Orange service at Drumcree church without agreement over the parade to follow would be catastrophic, said the editorial in the Church of Ireland Gazette. "The unity of the Church of Ireland would not survive it," it declared.

The article said last month's scenes of riots and mayhem had strained relations within the Church as never before and exposed it to international condemnation.

The unwritten and unacknowledged agreement between the Church and Orangemen — an axis of Unionism — had come to an end, it said. A new relationship was being forged, but it was far from clear what the parade which would follow would be.

A token presence of Orangemen remain camped outside the church. The chip vans and stalls have gone but church members fear they are indelibly implicated in a protest dubbed "Glastonbury for bigots".

The failed protest has sparked debate over tactics among Orangemen but the impact on the Church was

more fundamental, said the article.

"It is time to be talking about the nature and character of Orange services and about the flying of flags on church buildings. 'Parishes will need to think about their commitment to building the bridges of friendship and mutual respect with their Roman Catholic neighbours.'"

The Reverend Alan Harper, chairman of the Church's sub-committee on sectarianism, denied there would be a split if Drumcree was not resolved. "Talk about a split is to go too far. The scenes of disorder surrounding Drumcree have held the Church up to international condemnation."

Working women still in charge of the kitchen, survey suggests

Annella Gentilman

CLEARLY the sexual revolution has a very long way to go. A survey published yesterday revealed that women who work full time still devote much of their free time to cooking home-made meals for their families, unaided by their partners.

Quashing the perception that families where both partners have full-time jobs dine exclusively on pre-prepared microwave food, the survey of 330,000 people suggests that traditional domestic role models remain strong.

Old-style families, where the woman does not work, are only slightly more likely to eat home-made food on a regular basis.

Overall, 86 per cent of female respondents said they were solely responsible for preparing the daily evening meal.

Chris Lovell, director of advertising agency LVB Draftworldwide which conducted the poll, said: "This survey clearly shows that the predicted demise of the great British family meal-time has not happened."

However, Pat Zadora, national president of Business and Professional Women UK, remained cautious about the conclusions. "This survey implies that most women are still tied to the kitchen sink and I don't accept that. The division of labour is becoming much fairer, especially among younger couples."

"There was a term used in the 70s to describe the probation service, and it was 'screws on wheels'."

Decca Aitkenhead

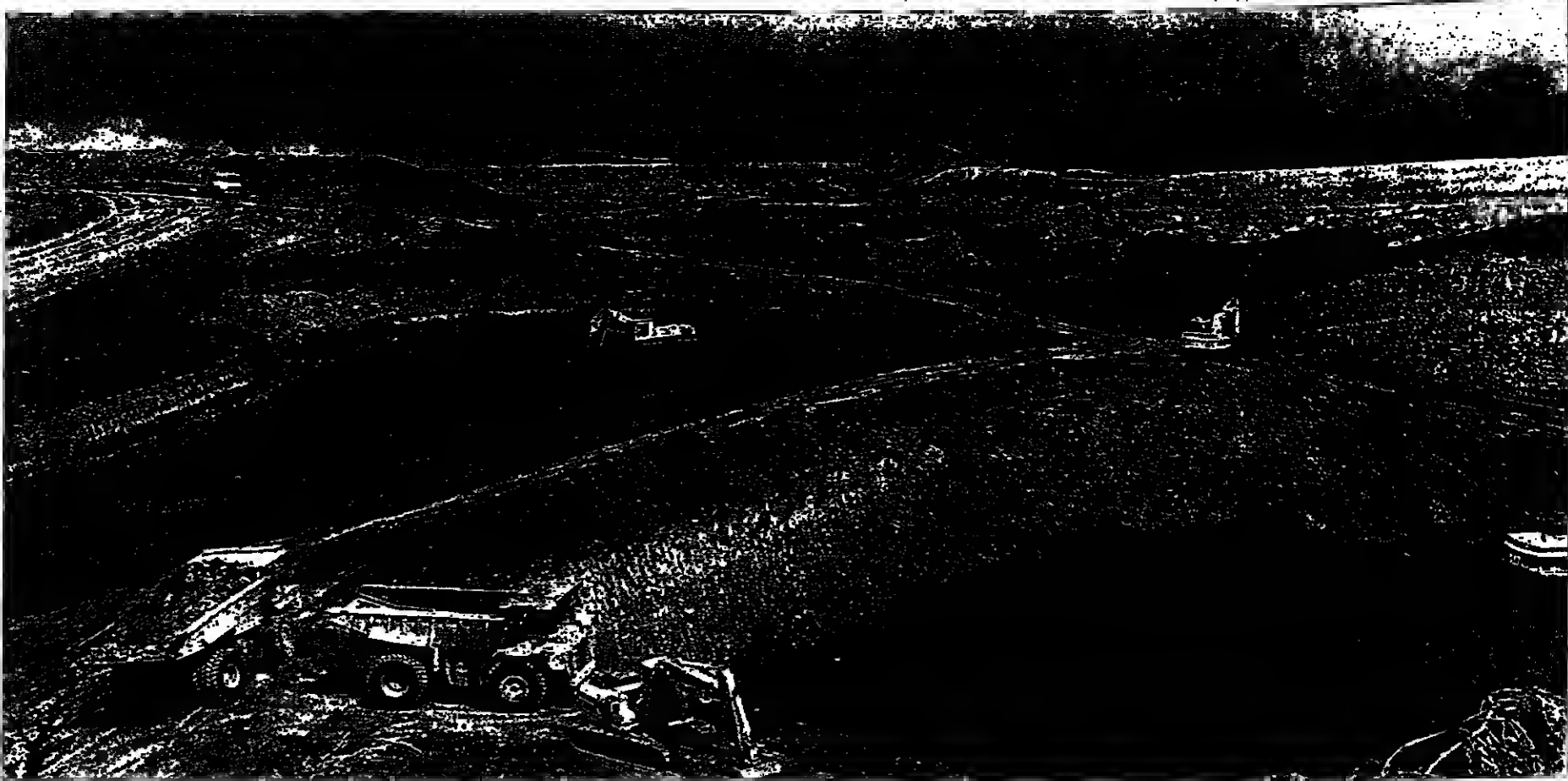
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education

Every Tuesday in the

The Guardian

Singh family members watch the excavation of a huge pit (right) outside their home. "There is no peace any more. The whole thing is affecting our health. There is no future here for us, but we cannot move" PHOTOGRAPHS: GRAHAM TURNER



Villagers on the brink of rubbish tip blight

Homeowners must seek redress in Euro-court if landfill licence is granted. Paul Brown reports

THE population of the ancient village of Boothorpe in Leicestershire faces ruin because of a vast pit being dug next to their homes to take the county's household waste for 13 years.

The village, mentioned in the Domesday book, was once in rolling countryside but now hangs on the edge of a

100ft cliff above an open cast mine which is still being excavated. Once the mining is complete, the quarrying company, Hepworth of Sheffield, wants permission to fill it with rubbish.

Leicestershire has a mounting rubbish problem and will run out of landfill sites in two years. Anyone who has a hole and planning permission to

fill it with household waste has a valuable property.

Michelle Coombs, of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, said: "There are so many landfill sites being licensed in south and central England it is difficult to get more than 10 miles away from one. Local communities are affected by traffic noise and dust, the environment is polluted by methane and leachate and landscapes are damaged."

Richard Needham, a director of Hepworth Properties, accepts that the company's plans affect Boothorpe. He

once offered the villagers a third of the value of their homes in compensation if they stopped objecting to the scheme — an offer withdrawn after it was described by objectors as a bribe.

He denies that the company is exploiting clay and coal mining permissions dating from the 1980s merely to make holes to fill with rubbish. He says the contractor is selling the coal and clay being extracted, which will pay for the excavation.

David Taylor, Labour MP for Leicestershire North West, is introducing a 10-min-

ute rule bill into the Commons in October to try to end the practice of digging holes to fill them with rubbish. He wants to draw attention to the plight of the Boothorpe villagers and others like them.

He knows the bill has no hope of becoming law in this session but hopes to force the Government to live up to an election pledge to ban new open cast mine sites.

But the villagers believe it will be too late to save them. They plan to take their case for compensation to the European Court of Human Rights.

For hundreds of families affected by landfill who have discovered that the rash of privatisations of the 1980s and early 1990s have deprived them of their right to compensation for planning blight.

Public bodies could be forced to pay compensation, but under planning legislation there is no right to sue private companies.

Susan Refflein, a Boothorpe resident, said: "We have been robbed of the value of our homes because no one wants to buy next to a giant landfill... It seems we must take a test case to the Euro-

pean Court of Human Rights to get equal rights with people in other EU countries."

Mr Taylor said: "I can see that this development is in Hepworth's best commercial interests — this will be a valuable hole in the ground — but it cannot be said to be in the best interests of the local community."

The home closest to the pit is Boothorpe Hall, the 16-bedroom home of the extended Singh family, who are Leicestershire knitwear manufacturers. The Hall, where they have lived for 17 years, was valued at £1 million before work

began on the tip. Kulbir Kaur Singh said: "There is no peace anymore. The children cannot do their homework because of the dust. The whole thing is affecting our health. There is no future here for us, but we cannot move. We do not know what to do."

Roger Hockney, assistant director of environmental planning for Leicestershire, said: "There is no provision in planning to help these people. The essence of land use planning is that if there is demonstrable harm then permission should be refused."

Peer freed early from jail

Helen Carter

LORD Brocklet was due to be freed from prison this morning after serving half of a five year sentence for a bungled \$4.5 million insurance fraud.

Brocklet, aged 46, a former sporting friend of Prince Charles, was convicted in 1996 of attempting to swindle General Accident insurers by faking the theft of four expensive cars from his Hertfordshire stately home.

His early release from Springhill open prison in Buckinghamshire for good behaviour will be celebrated by a breaking-out party on Sunday, organised by his friend and former army colleague, Nigel Hadden-Paton.

The Eton-educated baron had been facing financial ruin with debts estimated



Lord Brocklet: Assaulted by his fellow prisoners

at £16 million in 1991 when he destroyed and hid three Ferraris and a Maserati from his 220 million collection, then contacted police claiming they had been stolen. He was arrested four years later.

His home, Brocklet Hall,

is now occupied by a German entrepreneur who paid £10 million for a 60-year lease of the property.

Brocklet's wife, Isa, has divorced him and moved to Puerto Rico with their three children.

At Wellington prison in Northamptonshire, Brocklet fell prey to an extortion gang who thought he was still wealthy. And at Littlehey prison in Huntingdon, he went on hunger strike to protest about attacks by prisoners. He was moved to an open prison.

In the Court of Appeal last year he tried to have his sentence reduced because of victimisation but failed.

A prison officer at Springhill described Brocklet as "quite a character". Another added: "People here can talk to him just like he was one of them."

Government stalls on information bill

David Hencke
Westminster Correspondent

THE Government has dropped the Freedom of Information Bill from next year's legislative programme — so that a newer and weaker version can be drawn up by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, to go before Parliament in November, 1999.

Derry Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, the bill's strongest supporter, is expected to be outvoted next month when ministers meet to decide legislation to be included in the Queen Speech.

Support for a radical bill has been weakened significantly following the sacking of David Clark, as chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Mark Fisher, as treasury minister, in the cabinet reshuffle.

Jack Cunningham, the new Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, is reported to

regard the bill as "a chastening classes issue". He has been happy to surrender Cabinet Office staff and part of his budget to the Home Office so that he no longer has direct responsibility for it.

Mr Straw fought to delay and weaken it at almost every cabinet committee meeting this year.

He has received backing from the junior defence min-

ister, John Spellar, and sporadic support from Peter Mandelson, now Trade and Industry Secretary.

At Whitehall, Sir Richard Wilson, now Cabinet Secretary and formerly permanent secretary at the Home Office, is no fan of open government and will be happy to see a weakened bill. The Foreign Office too will welcome delay.

Labour MPs are unhappy

with the Government's reported moves.

Tam Dalyell, a long-standing friend of Mr Clark, who drew up the draft bill, said he believed it was Mr Clark's association with it that led to him being sacked.

He said: "If he had remained and they had dropped the bill, I think he would have resigned, and they must have known that."

Tess Kingham, Labour MP for Gloucester, said: "I think it [the bill] would do a lot to help restore the public's faith in politicians. It is a great symbolic thing. We say we're going to have more openness, so this should not be put on the back burner."

Mr Blair cannot risk dropping the bill altogether — as it would mean reneging on a manifesto commitment.

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البريد الإلكتروني

Lifetime chained to scandal for Lewinsky

Gary Younge in Washington assesses the toll on a key witness in the investigation of Bill Clinton

THE young woman from Beverly Hills 30210 took centre stage yesterday as she climbed the steps of the federal court house in Washington to give testimony that could deal a crippling, and possibly fatal, blow to the Clinton presidency.

When Monica Lewinsky was asked a few weeks ago what she wanted for her 25th birthday she is reported to have told relatives: "My freedom... I want my life back."

This time last year, if the testimony she planned to give yesterday is to be believed, she was an ambitious young woman with a saucy secret — that of performing oral sex on Bill Clinton.

Now she is a virtual prisoner within her flat in the

Watergate complex — one of the most public figures in the country living one of the most solitary and lonely of existences.

At least in part, it is a predicament of her own making. Not only did she supposedly have an affair with the president, but she was indiscreet, sharing details with a friend, Linda Tripp, and keeping a dress allegedly stained with the president's semen as a rather crude memento.

But she could never have predicted that her confidences would be betrayed by Ms Tripp, putting her in the middle of a political storm that would involve members of her family and destroy her private life.

She has been unable to call friends because the phone might be tapped or the friend put under subpoena

to testify over whether Mr Clinton tried to persuade the former White House intern to lie under oath about their relationship.

She cannot leave her flat because she will be followed. Lawyers have advised her not to visit the gym at the Watergate complex because she might be photographed by tabloid newspapers. She could not even attend her mother's secret wedding for fear that the paparazzi might discover her presence and ruin the event.

She has no job and is hardly in a position to look for one. Shopping is usually left to a handful of confidants. On the few occasions that she does venture out it is in a hooded wig, sunglasses and baseball cap. Once, while taking a taxi to her lawyer's, she was spot-

ted by people in another car who gave chase in the hope of getting a picture.

So she stays in, watching her past being dissected and her face being viewed in newspapers and on television, and venting bitter resentment at every sight of Ms Tripp.

Investigators for Kenneth Starr — the independent prosecutor who is looking into Mr Clinton's business and other dealings — have raked through her phone bills, closets and e-mails, scoured her computer's hard drive and even procured evidence of the books she had bought.

Branded a tart and a bimbo, she has provided rich fodder for comedians and cartoonists alike. Mr Clinton's spin doctors have portrayed her as "Daisy", and even her former lawyer, William Ginsburg, has referred to her as an "immature" youngster with a tendency to "overreact".

In the hours of taped phone conversations recorded by Linda Tripp, Ms Lewinsky admitted she was a liar. "I have lied all my life," she said.

Yesterday she was reported to be confessing that she had lied again.

In an affidavit she submitted earlier this year in the sexual harassment case lodged against the president by Paula Jones — a woman who says Mr Clinton propositioned her in an Arkansas hotel room — Ms Lewinsky denied having a sexual relationship with the president.

Yesterday she was — if true to the terms of a deal she struck for immunity from prosecution — admitting to the grand jury in Mr Starr's investigation that she did have such a relationship.

Mr Starr hopes her testimony will help him nail the president — not as an adulterer but as a liar. Ms Lewinsky hopes it will help her get her life back.



Shielded by her father Bernard (left), Monica Lewinsky (centre) enters his Los Angeles home earlier this week before testifying in Washington. PHOTOGRAPH: DAMIAN DOVARGANES

US calls for tough stand over Iraqi defiance

Mark Tran in New York

THE United States yesterday called for a strong international diplomatic response as Iraq stepped up its defiance of the United Nations by preventing a team of inspectors from carrying out searches for banned weapons.

Iraq's latest act of obstruction came as the UN Security Council and the secretary-general, Kofi Annan, heard from Richard Butler, the chief UN weapons inspector, on his failed talks in Baghdad earlier this week.

The council is expected to issue a demand for Iraq to resume its co-operation with the UN Special Commission (Unscm) supervising the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. The US and Britain are expected to push for a strongly-worded statement, while Russia, France and China can be expected to try to tone down any rebuke.

The council met the day after President Saddam Hussein broke co-operation with inspectors in protest at eight years of economic sanctions, renegeing on an agreement signed with Mr Annan in February that averted US and British air strikes. In that memorandum of understanding, Iraq pledged to "co-operate fully" with Unscm and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and to grant "unconditional and unrestricted access" to sites in Iraq.

"Iraq took a policy decision to stop co-operating with Unscm in August 1997 because it saw no end to crippling sanctions whether it worked with Unscm or not," said Khalil Metar, a Middle East analyst. "But efforts by France and Russia have managed to delay a confrontation."

Iraq's latest move again highlighted divisions within the UN Security Council. These began to surface even before Mr Butler's return to New York. Yuri Fedotov, Russia's deputy representative to the UN, implied that Mr Butler bore some responsibility for the breakdown in talks. He said: "We are strongly convinced that Iraq is not the only one to blame for this situation, when a decision has been taken to break discussions. This decision was

understand was taken by the chairman of Unscm without duly consulting the secretary-general and Security Council."

Russia and France also blame the US and Britain for contributing to the impasse by objecting to closing Iraq's nuclear file last month. Russia had urged the council to close the file based on an IAEA report which found no evidence of an existing Iraqi nuclear weapons programme, although it said many questions remained unanswered.

In its latest challenge to the UN, Iraq is demanding an overhaul of Unscm to lessen British and US influence and in effect the dismissal of Mr Butler, a blunt-speaking Australian diplomat.

Bill Richardson, the US ambassador, rallied to Mr Butler's defence, saying the US stood behind him and Unscm. "Iraq is not going to call the shots on disarmament," Mr Richardson told reporters. In his briefing, Mr Butler said he proposed discussing the substantive issues that remained outside the June schedule of work, such as VX nerve gas, concealment and implications of a recently found document concerning the verification of chemical weapons. Mr Butler said the deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, rejected both proposals.

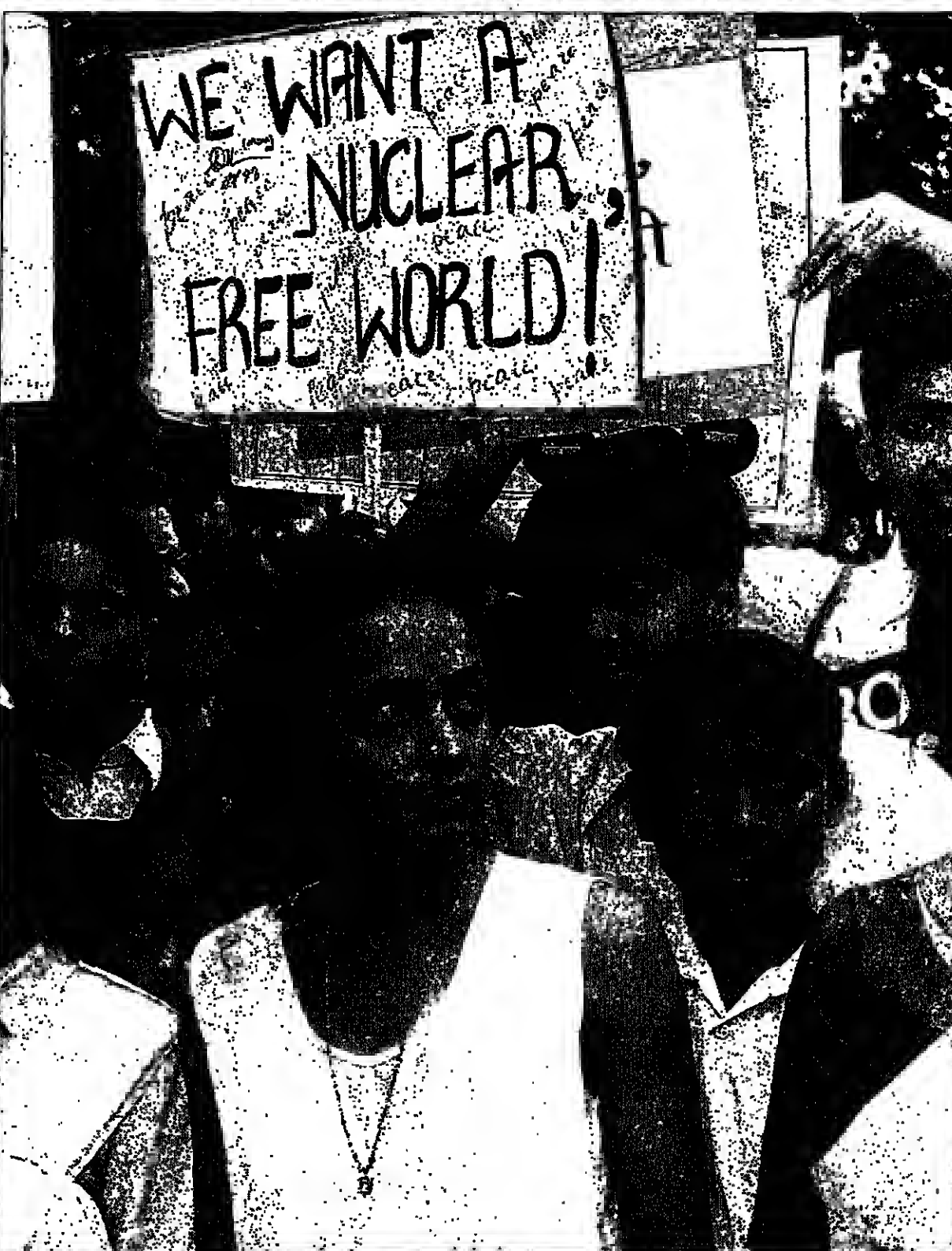
Mr Aziz also insisted Mr Butler report to the council immediately that there were no more proscribed weapons and related materials in Iraq and that sanctions should be lifted immediately.

Mr Richardson yesterday accused Iraq of repeatedly violating UN Security Council resolutions and its memorandum of understanding signed with Mr Annan, and he called for "an appropriate, strong response."

But US officials admit that the Clinton administration has little appetite for military action because of a lack of international support, apart from Britain.

In Iraq a team of inspectors was stopped from carrying out their work because government officials refused to accompany them.

In another step towards confrontation, Iraq told the IAEA it could no longer carry out surprise inspections of Iraq's nuclear programme.



The writer Arundhati Roy, winner of last year's Booker prize, leads the demonstration against India's nuclear tests in New Delhi yesterday on the 53rd anniversary of the US atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. PHOTOGRAPH: RAJENDRAN

Indians march in protest on Hiroshima day

THE Booker prize-winning writer Arundhati Roy was among those who led 5,000 people on a march through New Delhi yesterday to denounce India's nuclear test programme and mark the 53rd anniversary of the Hiroshima atomic bomb.

Shouting "Bread not Bombs", protesters warned that a similar catastrophe

could occur in the subcontinent because of nuclear tests carried out in May.

"Both India and Pakistan now have the capability to perpetrate the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on each other, not once but many times," a resolution said. "The people of India and Pakistan must stop this madness which threatens us with mutual an-

ihilation." In the Pakistani capital Islamabad only 200 people turned out for an anti-nuclear march. "Don't make our cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki," read a banner.

Mubashir Hasan, a former Pakistani finance minister, went to New Delhi to join the rally and said the tests were unnecessary. "There was no threat to either India or Paki-

stan, either from each other or from anyone else," Mr Hasan said.

In Hiroshima the Japanese prime minister, Keizo Obuchi, condemned the weapons tests that have hindered international efforts to restrict nuclear arms. "It is very regrettable that both India and Pakistan carried out nuclear tests," he said. — AP.

News in brief

Sumatra mass graves blamed on military

MASS GRAVES containing thousands of people apparently killed by Indonesian armed forces suppressing an insurgency in the province of Aceh should be investigated by an international team, human rights activists said yesterday.

In the past two months nine graves containing hundreds of bodies have been found in the northern region of Sumatra. But, say activists, the authorities are reluctant to do anything about it. The Indonesian justice minister, Muladi, said the government still had to verify the graves.

Rufiadi, a lawyer with the Legal Aid Institute in the province, said: "Many people now do not trust the Indonesian authorities and are asking for an international team to come here to look into it all."

Most of the victims were reportedly killed by the Indonesian army between 1989 and 1992, during a crackdown on separatists. Events in Aceh have emerged since the death of the former dictator Suharto in May. — John Aglionby, Jakarta.

Tunisian migrants to go home

ITALY and Tunisia yesterday signed an agreement giving the green light for the repatriation of hundreds of illegal Tunisian immigrants detained in Italy.

More than 15,000 illegal immigrants have been expelled from Italy since the spring and some 2,000 are at holding centres while Italian immigration authorities decide on their fate.

Lamberto Dini, the Italian foreign minister, welcomed the agreement as putting a brake on clandestine immigration into Europe. The countries are to co-operate in a crackdown on the smuggling of migrants, and Italy will provide economic aid to the poorest areas of Tunisia.

Mario Borghezio, a Northern League MP who called for immigration to be linked with identification codes, said the agreement amounted to an expensive sting for Italy. — Philip Willan, Rome.

Russia demands oil taxes

THE Russian government yesterday threatened to seize the assets and possibly reduce export quotas of three large oil companies that have failed to pay back taxes.

The government has toughened its stance towards tax-dodging oil companies, which are among the country's biggest export earners, to increase tax revenues.

Vladimir Popov, a spokesman for the federal tax service, said the oil companies Sidanko, Slavneft, Eastern Oil Company and Onakho had not paid taxes incurred between May and July. He said Sidanko, Eastern and Onakho face the possible seizure of their assets, but did not explain why Slavneft did not. — AP, Moscow.

Hostage-taker extradited

ONE of the hostage-takers in the bank robbery that spawned the term "Stockholm syndrome" will be extradited from Spain, where he was arrested four months ago, Danish police said yesterday.

Daniel Demunyk was arrested in the Canary Islands in April at the request of Danish authorities who allege he is involved in Danish and amphibious smuggling.

In 1973 Mr Demunyk, a Belgian, and another man held four people hostage for six days in a Stockholm bank robbery that went awry. The hostages developed close attachments to their captors, a phenomenon that has come to be known as the "Stockholm syndrome". — AP, Copenhagen.

Singer attacks US racism

THE American jazz singer Nina Simone yesterday blamed racism in the United States for her decision to live abroad for the past 25 years.

Speaking to reporters in Beirut a day after arriving in Lebanon to sing at an annual festival, Ms Simone said that, as a black person: "I have paid a heavy price fighting the establishment."

She did not elaborate, but said racial inequality in the US was now "worse than ever", adding: "I have not lived there for 25 years because of the racism."

Ms Simone, aged 65, took part in the civil rights movement in the 1960s and dedicated several songs to the cause of racial equality. She left the US in 1973 and lived in the Caribbean and Africa until settling in Europe. — AP, Beirut.

Bulgaria's Zhivkov dies

TODOR ZHIVKOV, Bulgaria's Communist dictator for 35 years and eastern Europe's last surviving Stalinist leader, has died, officials said yesterday. He was 86.

Zhivkov, who died on Wednesday night, had fallen into a coma after being hospitalised on July 8 with a respiratory infection, the official BTA news agency reported. He had suffered from diabetes and other ailments in recent months.

Zhivkov held the record among his eastern European peers for time in office — from 1954 until his fall in the anti-communist revolutions of 1989. — AP, Sofia.

Nevis ponders a split

ABOUT 6,000 voters on the island of Nevis will decide in a referendum on Monday whether to secede from the island of St Kitts, just two miles away.

If two-thirds of those voting say Yes, Nevis will become the hemisphere's tiniest — and one of the world's smallest — independent countries, boasting a population of scarcely 11,000.

Nevis, which covers 36 square miles, reluctantly joined St Kitts in a federation after the two islands won independence from Britain in 1983. Pro-secessionists say Nevis contributes 38 per cent of the federation's tax revenue, but receives only 21 per cent of government spending. If they win the vote, Nevis would become independent within the next year or so. — AP, Miami.

Congo rebels attack oil port as uprising spreads

Alex Duval Smith
Africa Correspondent

REBELS in Congo yesterday sent a powerful signal that their revolt had spread across the country when they flew into its main Atlantic oil port, more than 3,200 miles from the eastern command base of the uprising.

As the government of former Zaïre threatened war against Rwanda, the eastern neighbour it claims planned the uprising, the rebels set out to prove that theirs was more than a revolt by Tutsis. They attacked the port of Muanda and a nearby hydroelectric power station which supplies Kinshasa, the capital.

Before a regional summit on the conflict in Zimbabwe today the Foreign Office advised Britons in Congo to leave "while there are still flights". In Kinshasa up to 10,000 people chanting anti-Tutsi slogans staged a demonstration backing the government.

The marchers carried stuffed effigies of two former members of President Laurent Kabila's cabinet — both Tutsis — whose defection on Wednesday added credence to the rebellion.

The rebels now boast a leader, Arthur Z'Ahidi Nsimba, the non-Tutsi opposition politician. He is supported by Bizima Karaba, the former foreign minister, and Degratias Bugera, the presi-

dential aide, making the government's threat against Rwanda appear to be unconvincing.

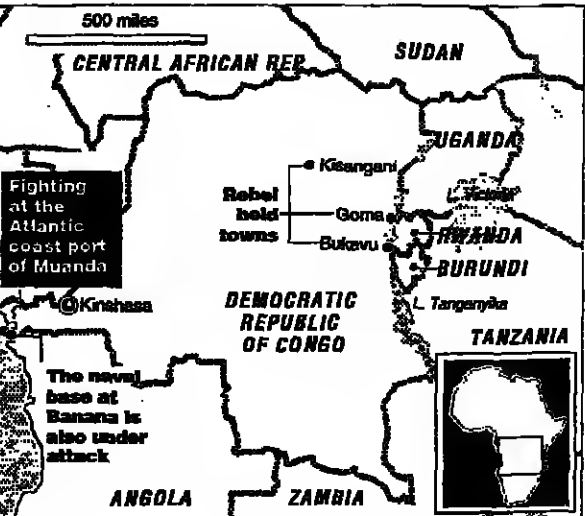
Didier Munganga, the government spokesman, said Congo would "extend the war into Rwanda" unless the international community put pressure on the tiny country to withdraw its troops. He said Rwanda was a "criminal state" which meddled in foreign affairs while drawing on "international pity" over the genocide of Tutsis in 1994.

The rebels, who began their uprising last Sunday in eastern Congo, are believed to include Banyamulenge — Congolese Tutsis originally from Rwanda — and Rwandan soldiers and troops formerly loyal to Mobutu Sese Seko,

the late dictator. The Banyamulenge and the Rwandans played a key role in President Kabila's victory over President Mobutu in May last year. But last week Mr Kabila, fearing a coup, ordered them to leave the country.

By last night the rebels had reportedly seized the key eastern cities of Bukavu, Uvira and Goma. Fighting continued in Kisangani, the largest city in the interior, as well as around Muanda, in the west.

The rebels fighting in Muanda flew there on Tuesday and are believed to be supported by members of a pool of up to 20,000 "Mobutu" troops. When the rebellion began, they were being "retrained" for assimilation into Mr Kabila's army.



Analysis The super league

Fantasy football gets real

This week top English football clubs confessed their involvement in shadowy Continental conversations about a pan-European league. But is Silvio Berlusconi's Super League a genuine proposal or a bid in the big clubs' poker game with the football authorities? **John Duncan** and **Simon Beavis** knock the ball about.

What is actually being proposed? As far as anyone can tell we're talking about a closed shop. Europe's top teams — 32 of them — are being invited to join. There's no relegation or promotion as in the domestic leagues. The teams would play against each other, probably in four divisions of eight, with play-offs to decide the champions. There is vague talk too of some form of wider knock-out competition.

Who is doing the talking? The instigator is Media Partners, a marketing consultancy outfit based in Milan. It has been involved in negotiating pay-per-view television deals for football in Italy. It is not in fact owned by Silvio Berlusconi, owner of AC Milan, media magnate and founder of Forza Italia, a right of centre political party. But the company's owner Rodolfo Hecht does have links to the former Italian prime minister.

Mr Berlusconi is involved in talks with Rupert Murdoch, owner of Sky Television — and the Saudi Arabian investor Prince Al Waleed. Having decided not to sell his Mediastream empire to Mr Murdoch, Mr Berlusconi has begun negotiations with him to challenge American dominance of the film business. Extending this to digital sports seems a logical next step. They are considering a pan-European venture which, if successful, might well buy rights to European super league football. Talks are said to centre on the three taking a 30 per cent stake in Germany's troubled media group, Kirch. No precise link has been established between these moguls. Nor would these men be the only people interested in securing rights to the league. But few other groupings would have such power or experience.

So is the super league a serious proposal? These people are serious but the importance of the talks that are now going on has been exaggerated. Europe's big clubs are frustrated with the conditions of competition in Europe and revenue but their interests are not all the same and they are some distance off boiling point. Several clubs have admitted talking to the Italians and their confederates about the league, including Manchester United, Arsenal, Ajax and Real Madrid.

"We are all looking for solutions for the world of football, to adapt to the times," said the president of Real Madrid, Lorenzo Sanz. He said the project would be open to any club that could contribute and predicted that the new super league to be launched within two or three years.

That sounds like a pretty serious sort of proposition. Not necessarily like a striker when the long ball goes up, none of the major European clubs want to be left behind. Something might catch on, they reason, so the best policy is discreetly to keep in touch. But not actually to sign anything. Clubs are however commercial entities. Stock-market rules have forced the two English clubs to admit what is going on. Their statements — almost identical — say a great deal about the cat-and-mouse game they are playing.

Manchester United (Arsenal) confirms that it is involved in discussions concerning the formation of proposed new European competitions. We would, however, stress that we are totally committed to the FA Premier League and other domestic competitions and are very mindful of our responsibilities to the governing bodies. There is no question of Manchester United (Arsenal) committing itself to a new competition until all appropriate consultations have taken place. Football is a developing industry and we have a duty to examine any serious proposal that we feel might be beneficial to Manchester United (Arsenal), its fans, shareholders and football generally.

Which translates as... We'll listen to serious proposals but we know which side our bread is buttered and we're not ready to risk our place in our domestic leagues just yet.

Will the super league happen? Yes and no. In many ways we already have one. There used to be a knockout competition called the European Cup in which all the champions of Europe competed in a knockout. Every country got one entry whether you were England or Luxembourg. But the major countries thought this stank. None of their supporters were interested in this tournament until the semi-finals when they started playing clubs of their own size. They demanded a league system of only the biggest teams that would guarantee them a decent number of games. They got it in the shape of the Champions League.

So why isn't the Champions League the European super league? In many ways it is. Since it was formed the top two teams from the participating countries have been admitted to the league. For a couple of years the big clubs were happy. But there are several factors that are making clubs itchy. They want changes in

League Collect the set

Liverpool Founded: 1892 Stadium: Anfield Rd Turnover: 1997: £28,153,000 Average attendance: 45,000 Euro roll of honour European Cup - 6/84	Man Utd Founded: 1878 Stadium: Old Trafford Turnover: 1997: £37,939,000 Euro roll of honour European Cup Winners' Cup - 90/91; European Super Cup - 91	Ajax Founded: 1900 Stadium: Amsterdam Arena Members: 70,000 in their country Euro roll of honour European Cup - 95; European Cup Winners' Cup - 87; UEFA Cup - 82; European Super Cup - 85	Borussia Dortmund Founded: 1909 Stadium: Westfalenstadion Tickets: 35,000 season Euro roll of honour European Cup - 97
Real Madrid Founded: 1902 Stadium: Santiago Bernabéu Euro roll of honour UEFA Cup 86; European Cup - 98	Bayern Munich Founded: 1900 Stadium: Olympiastadion Euro roll of honour UEFA Cup - 1986; European Cup Winners' Cup - 97	Barcelona Founded: 1899 Stadium: Camp Nou Members: Over 100,000 worldwide Euro roll of honour European Cup - 92; European Super Cup 87/88; Cup Winners' Cup - 85	Marseille Founded: 1898 Stadium: Velodrome Euro roll of honour European Cup - 93 (first for a French team)
Juventus Founded: 1898 Stadium: Delle Alpi Euro roll of honour European Cup - 96; European Cup Winners' Cup 84; UEFA Cup 88; European Super Cup 85	AC Milan Founded: 1899 (by an Englishman as Milan football and cricket club) Stadium: Giuseppe Meazza Euro roll of honour European Super Cup 95; European Cup - 94		

its format. That is why many of us regard the shenanigans over the super league as a game. The threat of such a league becomes a stick with which to beat Uefa (the European football authority which manages the Champions League) to pressure it into conceding changes.

Why are clubs discontented with the Champions League?

Firstly they hate the uncertainty of having to qualify. It's a business argument. They argue that it isn't acceptable that one had season at home, missing the cut, can mean losing £10 million in projected income. The sporting notions of competition and challenge and the joys of taking part don't mean very much to the modern large clubs. The Premier League had a turnover of

£463 million in 1996/97 according to Deloitte Touche. That was £120 million more than the year before and the projected increase for 1997/98 is showing an equally sharp rise. Manchester United made a profit of £26 million on a turnover of £87 million. Eight Premier League clubs are listed on the stock market. Football clubs paid a total of £186 million in tax in 1996/97.

There is too much at stake here to risk it on the kick of a mere football. This is no longer a game.

Is it just in England that the big business argument applies?

No. In each of the main football markets there are three or four clubs which have outgrown their leagues. They are much larger in income and interna-

tional appeal than the other teams they play week-in week-out. The remedy is to engineer more games against teams with global appeal such as Barcelona, Milan and Manchester United, teams which they feel are more their peers than Coventry, Foggia and Albacete.

So where will all the new money come from? Where it has for the past

decade, television. Some 20 per cent of football club revenues are now derived directly from television — £92 million in 1996/97, according to Deloitte & Touche. In Italy earnings are even bigger with Serie A clubs raking in 32 per cent of revenues, or £122 million, from TV deals. Since the first exclusive television deal between the Premier League and Sky TV in 1992, a curious symbiosis has formed between soccer and satellite television.

But it is a junction which has become increasingly complex and steadily more fragile. Initially it was a marriage of convenience. It provided a new stream of earnings for football clubs desperately trying to fund their swelling wage bills and at the same time proved to be a ready way to build the audience and the profits of a struggling television operator. BSkyB, despite covering less than 25 per cent of households — is now Britain's most profitable broadcaster and that is thanks largely to football (and films). That message has been learned by a whole new set of broadcasters about to burst on to the scene.

Such as? The new digital televisions which are about to land on us. With the proliferation of new digital channels Sky is promising 200, the Cable television companies between 200 and 300 and OnDigital, the digital terrestrial venture between Granada and Carlton, an initial 30. The demand for content is expanding fast and that has sent the value of football rights soaring. This has put the football clubs and the Premiership in the driving seat. The big clubs know that they are the main appeal for the television companies and is a card they want the new lot to be shared equally as is done under the current Premier League deals.

What about threats to exploit if they even think about leaving, or to ban them or their players forever from any Fifa competition, including the World Cup? That's a negotiating ploy. Both parties privately realise that they need each other. The top clubs are contractually bound to the Premiership, but some experts believe the strength of the bond is up for question. The Office of Fair Trading is trying to assess whether the Premiership is a cartel. Legally binding the big clubs to it. If the answer is yes they might be able to break away contract or not. The key will be whether the Premiership can pressure Uefa to extend and amend the existing Champions League to make it a credible rival to a breakaway — something it will do in October. That is when we will see if there is any real appetite for battle by the clubs.

Sources: (1) Deloitte Touche annual review of football finance. Graphics sources: <http://www.uefa.com> Graphics: Paddy Allen; Glyn Walters; Matt Buck. Research: Jan Crivinin. John Duncan is sports correspondent and Simon Beavis is media business editor.



Straw's screws on wheels
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Diary

Simon
Bowers

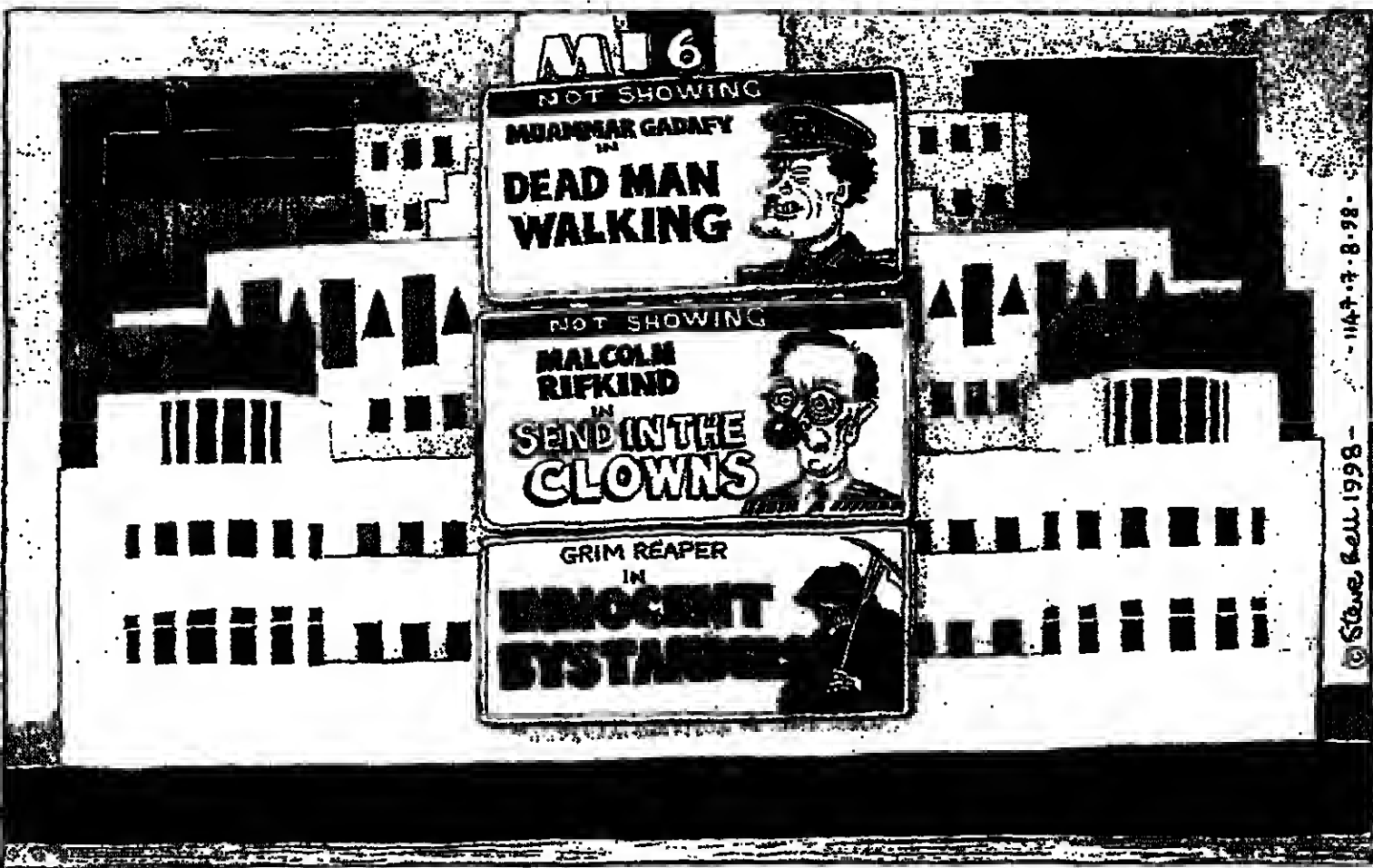
ONCE there was a paper which was proud to declare, "Our aims: the return of a Labour Government, nationalisation under workers' control of the banks, insurance companies, land and major industries..." Once there was a paper which could say, "Young Guard is an open and democratic paper produced and financed entirely by Young Socialists." Once there was an editor who respected only democratically elected authority. He could stand tall and proclaim: Young Guard "is run by its readers who hold regular readers' meetings, wherever there is support, and elect representatives to an editorial board which meets quarterly. This editorial board elects the editor and assistant editors necessary to produce the paper." Where are you now, Angus MacDonald?

THE gossip community's campaign of support for Daily Mail diarist Nigel Dempster, who is alleged to have struck out at his deputy Adam Heliker, receives joyous news. The ungrateful Adam is said to no longer be pursuing his Punch magazine-funded slander-by-gestures suit against his boss. To succeed Adam would have had to show that Mr Dempster created the false impression, in front of colleagues, that Adam had provoked him in some way. This unusual civil action was seen within the Dempster camp as the worst possible outcome, entitling the youngster to considerably more financial recompense than a criminal suit. Friends of the Master will recall how he was taken to court for printing a libellous remark last August, but was unable to convince Judge Richard Walker — who inexplicably described him as "inept" — that he was not a man of means, and was fined £10,000. We urge Mr D to stick to his convincing defence that Adam appeared to be about to hurl his boss over a balcony.

YESTERDAY the Trade and Industry Select Committee published its report on industrial and trade relations with Japan. "BNFL has a Japanese orderbook of around £2 billion and prospects for further orders of the same scale," reports the report. "BNFL enjoys a high reputation in Japan. The Tokyo Embassy has on its staff a seconded counsellor to look after this highly valued relationship." Closer students of Japanese history will know August 6 as the 33rd anniversary of Hiroshima.

THE Diary's People-Friendly Guide to New Labour Lexicon, running through the coming closer to establishing its first definition. Our search for meaning in John Prescott's phrase "traditional values in a modern setting" has prompted FA Chalmers to write from Southwick. "Perhaps it can refer to you," he writes, "to a phrase often heard in the messrooms of merchant ships" — our acting PM was, you will recall, a merchant seaman himself — "as the cook yet again recycles another bit of last Sunday's roast: same old shit, different sauce." A bottle of champagne goes to Mr Chalmers for an enchanting interpretation, though we are not sure it captures the full genius of Prescott's equivocality. If you have a New Labour sound bite you want analysed by our experts, or have a definition you want included in our Guide, let us know.

THE Income Data Services (staffed largely by leftwingers) released a survey yesterday entitled Directors' Pay 1998. At £250 the 60-page document is not cheap but, say some journalists who received a review copy gratis, it is nevertheless both a cracking and instructive read. When Tribune newspaper rang for their copy IDS editor Steve Tutton said he was unable to help without receipt of the cover price. "We didn't think it would be of interest to their readers, it wouldn't suit their market," explains a IDS press officer. "It wasn't a PR decision not to send them a copy, it was a commercial decision." Traditional values in a modern setting. Marvellous.



Giving probation a new name is fine. As long as they don't change things

Decca
Aitkenhead

IT WAS the mark of Michael Howard that when he was Home Secretary he spoke wistfully of persuading ex-soldiers to sign up as probation officers. It is, likewise, characteristic of the new Labour Government to have misgivings about the probation service, and to propose, as a solution, to re-brand it. Yesterday, a Home Office minister announced some suggestions for a new name, such as the Community Justice Enforcement Agency. Ever sensitive to charges of Labour spin-doctoring, he vehemently denied that this was just a cosmetic exercise. Oddly enough, on this occasion one might hope that this is exactly what it is.

Official thinking behind the change of name is straightforward enough. Ministers believe the public regard probation officers as woolly liberals — "limp wristed folk in jumpers", as one penal expert put it to me yesterday — who use taxpayers' money to nannify criminals instead of punishing them. Probation orders and non-custodial penalties like community service are considered a joke, and offenders sentenced to them are routinely described by an indignant press as having got off "scot free".

There were other proposals

yesterday which will make fundamental changes to probation. The service is currently split into 54 different areas, each run by individual committees; there is no single agency speaking for the service, or directly accountable to the Home Secretary. Proposals to create a unified national agency with a director general, split into 42 divisions to correspond with police and Crown Prosecution Service areas, make some obvious sense. Similarly, plans to create closer relations between prison and probation staff should help rationalise what can be a muddled system.

Absent from yesterday's report was any suggestion that the probation service be merged with the prison service. This omission was not for want of consideration; Jack Straw has taken the idea very seriously indeed, not least because this is what he says in his favourite real-life think tank, the United States.

There, the Department of Corrections deals with prison and probation — and one need only consider America's prison population to see what a uniquely unsuccessful arrangement that is. It is said in the City that there is no such thing as a merger, only take-overs. In this "merger", it is not difficult to see which service would have been taken over.

Happily, the idea has been rejected. The very fact that it was taken seriously at all, however, gives grounds for some concern about the motives behind the other proposed changes, not least those for changing the name.

The Government says it wants the probation service to sound tougher — but there is much evidence to suggest

that it rather likes the idea of really making it much tougher, too.

Jack Straw has made no secret of his impatience with the probation service. He has, for example, dismissed Harry Fletcher, the highly regarded spokesman for the National Association of Probation Officers, as a relic from the 70s. Last year he delivered a blunt and public command to the probation service: "The probation service should not be following an agenda which is separate from the community you serve," he warned. He is reported to lament that the service is not in uniform.

In this Home Office report, particular attention is paid to the ageing legislation which still directs probation officers to "advise, assist and befriend" offenders.

This is not what the courts expect of probation officers, the report tells, and even less what the public expects, anyway. It's also anachronistic, and should be done away with. Like Clause Four, it might only be symbolic — but it's the wrong kind of symbol.

IT MAY indeed be only symbolic, and the probation service has spent the past 10 or 15 years getting "tougher". But symbols are important, and we should have one agency in the criminal justice system which does believe offenders can be rehabilitated, and by means other than draconian penalties. The public may believe that in prison works, and that little else does — but after all they've heard from Tory home secretaries in the past two decades, this is hardly surprising.

It is perhaps the task of a Labour Government to persuade them that this is not necessarily the case.

There was a term used in the 70s to describe a harsher probation service, and it was "screws on wheels". If the Government wants probation officers to be more like screws on wheels, it should be asked to reveal the amazing services to crime prevention with which the prison system can be credited. Britain's prison population is growing faster than anywhere else in the EC, three quarters of young men released in 1994 were reconvicted within two years; half were put back behind bars. The Home Office seldom asks whether we are getting value for money from prisons.

Prison very rarely works, but probation often can. To make it work, however, the service must employ people equipped to take on the chaotic and frequently disappointing task of keeping offenders from ending up back in court. This may well mean, among other things, assisting, befriending and advising.

Obviously its job is to protect the public. That's the whole point of it. But protecting the public in the long term is best done by convincing offenders to stop breaking the law, something more easily achieved by a partial ally than just another hostile enemy of authority.

If the Home Office wants to change the probation service in order to inspire public trust, and give the courts the confidence to use its services, then it's an excellent plan. If it wants to reassure the tabloid press, such spin-doctoring is entirely welcome. But if a new name means the start of a new service, this is a worry.

One must hope that this is simply another great example of a new Labour triumph of style over substance.

Suburban horror

Bill
Burford

I AM going to introduce three members of a new generation of American novelists. Technically they don't need introducing — they all have books in print in Britain. But it is only recently that I've come to appreciate that, between them, there is something genuinely new — that, in their own individual ways, they are one of the things that's next.

The writers are Rick Moody, Donald Antrim, and Jeffrey Eugenides. They know each other, I discovered. They're about the same age — mid-30s. They went to the same small college in New England — Brown in Rhode Island — and took the same classes, including ones taught by Angela Carter, who was a writer in residence at the time. All three writers now live in Brooklyn, blocks apart, although they all grew up outside New York, in the suburbs somewhere in the middle of the middle of America. And that's the key.

Eugenides grew up in the suburbs of Detroit. Detroit is Motown. Big expensive Cadillacs are made in Detroit. Chevrollets, Ford pickups, heavy four-wheel drive Jeeps. Detroit is gritty, and blue-collar — the Born-in-the-USA sensibility. It's no coincidence that Detroit gave birth to soul music and ladies who sing the blues. But the suburbs are different: it's where the white people live. In fact, after the riots, it's where the white people fled. And Eugenides's father, a mortgage banker, was among them. He continued to work, and returned to the suburbs to a home that was distinguished by its unforgiving pleasantness.

THERE was a giant fridge, full of giant American foods — two-gallon-sized plastic jugs of milk, TV dinners, stacks of minute steaks, and a 38-pound frozen turkey (for Thanksgiving). There were four television sets and seven telephones. This was the world of Donna Reed and Dick Van Dyke and countless American television shows of such banality that they captivated millions of people leading the same miraculously uneventful lives depicted on their screens. Rick Moody, a fellow suburbanite, confesses to watching hours of the stuff, six hours a day, a "TV junkie", while his father sat in the next room, watching his television knocking back a bourbon and peanuts, and Mom sat in the bedroom pretending to watch her television when in fact she was quietly having a nervous breakdown. American suburbs share

features of the British variety — the Surrey stockbroker belt or the experimental garden cities — but they are different. If only because they embraced so much of the culture at the time. No, this is the frightening thing: they were the culture of the time. But could any of this be the stuff of literature?

Recently I met up with the novelist Jay McInerney. We were talking about a project that involved McInerney's writing about his family, when suddenly these questions occurred to me. Why does McInerney write so exclusively about cities? McInerney, the novelist of nightclubs and glam models and late-night drugs, loves New York. I have met him on occasions when he has just returned to the city, and seen him positively exuberant at the sounds of car alarms and ambulances stuck in traffic and the punchy stench of air pollution. And then it occurred to me: he grew up in the suburbs — that's why he likes urban fifth. He grew up in the suburbs and has spent the rest of his life hurrying the experience.

These three writers have responded to the horrors of their upbringing in a different fashion — and that is their genius.

Donald Antrim's first novel, with its exquisite title, *Elect Mr Robinson For A Better World*, describes a neighbourhood of family homes with semi-circular drive-ways and local parks and careful lawns, and this unusual feature: the lawns are embedded with spikes (of the medieval torture variety) and the parks are stuffed with mines. Jeffrey Eugenides's *Virgin Suicides* offers up a community of barbed-wire, school yards, and elm trees — and a family of girls who keep knocking them down. At the heart of Rick Moody's *Ics Storm* (made into a film by Ang Lee) is a similar

Lawns are embedded with spikes and parks stuffed with mines

conflict: in fact at the heart of all these books is the same conflict: monotony meets menace.

I asked Rick Moody: could you ever contemplate returning to the suburbs? "No way, no way, no way!" he said, horrified at an idea which he had obviously never contemplated. "The ideal of the suburbs in the 50s and 60s, he continued, "was to escape the thorny problems of the city. They were a refuge. But the solution has proven patently wrong. The idea of it, to go back to the suburbs." And there was a genuine shudder in his voice.

I am also an exile of the suburbs. I suspect I found my refuge in Britain, where I lived for 30 years. And for ages I've been wondering about how they could ever be written about. And then, like a puff of smoke, a group of writers discovers how to do it. Thank you, Angela.

The Chancellor's welfare plan offers huge bonuses for dishonesty for workers and employees

Gordon's fatal floor

Frank Field

THE working family tax credit will amount to a major extension in means-testing to the working poor. The most immediate danger is the possibility of fraud: of employers "persuading" workers of the benefits of a very low wage which entitles them to maximum WFTC with perhaps major cash payments on top of this fraud-determined minimum wage. Such an outcome is not, unfortunately, that uncommon. If the fraud officers with whom I talked recently are reporting correctly their activities — and there is no reason whatsoever to believe otherwise. A not uncommon tale is of a few thousand pounds put through the books for tax and national insurance, yet many more thousands of

pounds drawn from the bank which the employers for some reason cannot explain its purpose. I held responsibility for fraud for around 10 weeks. During that time a green paper was produced — thanks largely to the quality of the DSS civil servants. But during this time I set in motion the next benefit review. Family credit is now under the microscope. All benefits are to be reviewed in turn as part of the DSS's good-housekeeping, and as part of the department's responsibility to parliament through the Public Accounts Committee. It is crucial we learn as much as possible about the angles which make family credit so vulnerable to fraud, so that this knowledge can be fully utilised in planning family credit's replacement — the working family tax credit.

To rely only on a means-

tested addition to wages would be unacceptable. But that is not what the Government is proposing. A national minimum wage floor is being built into the labour market. If operated honestly, the working family tax credit will offer important sup-

The working family tax credit venture is fraught with great dangers

port, and ensure that those with children who work are better off than if they remained on benefits. But the whole of the working family tax credit venture is fraught with great dangers.

It offers huge bonuses

for dishonesty for both employers and workers. • It strengthens the employers' hold over workers. "These are the conditions, cheat, and both of us will be better off." • It thereby pulls employees into a spider's web of corruption.

• It rewards employers paying low wages.

• It takes pressure off improving productivity and thereby the scope for increasing real wages.

The working family tax credit cannot therefore ever be considered as an end in itself. Any Government which introduces it needs to commit itself to an economic and education strategy which will, over time, as real wages for those at the bottom rise, make the credit of less and less importance.

The other immediate issue is the growing reliance on means-tested sup-

plements for the elderly. The recent announcements of a pension guarantee — an enhanced income support rate according to age — for pensioners is welcome for two reasons.

It offers help to the poorest pensioners. And equality

important the Government, by implementing the pension guarantee, closes the debate on extending compulsory pension contributions for those still in work. Failure to follow this initiative with an extension of compulsion will play



havoc with the economy

and wider society. If this guarantee is offered without extending compulsory pension savings for those now in work, then the most powerful and disturbing of signals will be sent out to today's workforce. It will be, "Don't worry, don't bother saving, spend all you can today for tomorrow's tax cut."

Look after you through the new guaranteed pension." The alternative to this means-tested approach needs to be spent out and support from the public gained for such an approach. That is the primary reason I have returned to the backbenches. I believe I will now have greater opportunity and more influence from that position.

This is an extract from last night's speech by Frank Field MP, former welfare reform minister — to the Social Market Foundation

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Money, money

Clubs must play fair

FOOTBALL is a developing industry, said Manchester United in justifying its "conversations" with shadowy Continental about a break-away pan-European football league. But football is much more than a game. It is a sport, activity in and for itself. It has an ethos and a huge body of public hope and expectation behind it. Go too far down the big money road and the moguls take over the people's game. All they are left with is another version of Gladiators. On the pitch winning-at-all-costs becomes the order of play. No robo-ref, however well endowed by technology, is going to control a match where players have nothing in their heads but bonuses and the next Porsche.

Money has lately been flowing thick and fast. Transfers — even from clubs as lowly as Wrexham — command telephone numbers. Players, step forward young Michael Owen, become uninsurable. Deloitte & Touche calculates the Premier League netted £464 million the season before last. There's no point in regretting commerce or the application to football of its rules of contract. New revenue had to arrive. Tickets had to get dearer if matches were to be made safer and more comfortable. Top-rank players deserved more pay. The questions now concern how well the largesse of satellite television is being used and whether football is ignoring the example of rugby union and overpaying a small number of top dogs. The doubts are about equity and collectiv-

ity, and the obligations of the rich towards the poor, the duties and responsibilities of "clubs" that are still much more than mere private firms, whether their stock is quoted on the Stock Exchange or not. Such anxiety is likely to grow since there's more money to come. Silvio Berlusconi may have been thwarted by clean-handed Italian magistrates and the Olive Tree coalition but magnate he remains. As we know from Tony Blair's talk with Romano Prodi, tie-ups with Rupert Murdoch are in prospect.

Looking to the future, including the mooted European Super League — to which there may be less than meets the eye — football has to remember its roots. Millions of Catalans reverberate to events in Nou Camp. Merseyside's identity and destiny are bound up with the fate of Liverpool (and Everton ... and Tranmere Rovers). These "clubs" are civic as well as commercial entities. Football, in England, is also unfortunately a vehicle for anti-social expression. New police figures show less hooliganism but football remains dangerously attractive to a hard, perhaps growing core of violent men. They showed up at the World Cup as people who could afford it. But football's social class ascent carries with it the risk of exclusion. Paying for seats, paying for satellite television access, paying for expensive team shirts: good football is regrettably no longer for poor people.

In their talks about the future, chairmen and managers should bear in mind that this game does not belong to them. It has a dense undergrowth in smaller clubs and the millions who watch at home — growing numbers of women among them. Wrexham, Tranmere and Liverpool do belong in the same universe. Changes in the configuration of European club competition look likely. Uefa is going to come up with proposals for changing the Champion's League

(successor to the European Cup) but the idea that top clubs could seal themselves in some offshore enterprise is not only self-defeating but dangerous. Football's juices are local. They would dry up if some top echelon cut itself off. In the politics of the European Union there's a principle of subsidiarity which says those things best done locally should remain within the purview of local or national authorities. It applies in football, too.

Kabila's cabal

It needs a Congolese solution

AS THE Congolese revolt spread yesterday to the Atlantic Coast, a return of last year's successful insurrection — only with a different cast — became more likely. Having swept to power last May, President Laurent Kabila may soon appear only a brief first act in the post-Mobutu era. The relief then when he emerged from the bush was overwhelming. After decades of despotism on which Western strategic interests had shamefully smiled, former Zaire had a new chance. The scenes of rejoicing then along the rebel march to the capital were genuine. The tragedy is that once again the people's trust has been betrayed.

It was no secret that Mr Kabila came to power with military support from Tutsi-led Rwanda and from the eastern Congolese of the Tutsi minority. Strict regard for the principle of non-interference in internal affairs is hardly feasible across the arbitrary frontiers of colonially fractured Central Africa. And almost anything was justified to get rid of Mobutuism. (The same could be said of foreign support for the Rwandan insurgency which ended the Hutu-led genocide.) However Mr Kabila was

always a dubious quantity with a past history of opportunism and no perceptible guiding force except ambition. Sworn in to rule by decree he banned political activity for two years. His co-operation with the UN team investigating alleged massacres of Hutus in the east was ambiguous. His new government was quickly packed with supporters. Yet what may now bring him down is not a shortage of principle but a lack of consistency in choosing his allies, by turning against the Rwandans and domestic Tutsis who had brought him to power. The new rising follows his expulsion of Rwandan military advisers, and began soon after he had moved to lessen Tutsi influence in his regime.

Events in the last few days seem to be a replay, at enhanced speed, of the rebel build-up in autumn 1996. While the main towns in the east have quickly fallen, a new standard of Congo for the Congolese is being raised. Mr Kabila's foreign minister Bizima Karaha — a Congolese Tutsi — is heading up the rebellion, while a non-Tutsi politician Arthur Z'Ahidi Nkoma is named its political co-ordinator — the title given to Kabila before. More darkly, there are hints of financial backing from former Mobutists. Mr Nkoma says this is not a Tutsi struggle but a "struggle for all Congolese": as the next act begins, we can only hope against hope that this time it may be true.

Arthur's slate

Is he better as fact or fiction?

THE discovery of a slate with "Arthur" written on it during the last week of a season of archaeological excavations at Tintagel Castle (and revealed at the start of the Silly Season) might suggest that the person

behind it was Arthur Daley rather than Arthur Regis. But the find at Tintagel — the supposedly mythical birthplace of the (still) legendary King Arthur — appears to be a genuine historic discovery. It has already excited expert historians and is bound to re-ignite the almost magical worldwide appeal of the story of King Arthur. Excalibur, the Knights of the Round Table, Queen Guinevere, Merlin and Camelot. It won't do any harm either to the tourist appeal of Tintagel Castle in Cornwall (open daily, adults £2.70, children £1.40) and the local economy which is almost entirely dependent on the legend.

Dr Geoffrey Wainwright, English Heritage's chief archaeologist, described it as "the find of a lifetime". But he emphasised that although it was remarkable that a stone dating from the sixth century had been found inscribed with the name "Artognov" there was no evidence to link it either to the historical warrior Arthur (a genuine 6th-century warlord who roamed the country) or the legendary King Arthur. The latter appears to have been largely the confection of Geoffrey of Monmouth in the 12th century — and later embellished by Sir Thomas Malory and Lord Tennyson.

A myth that has survived so long without historical legs can only be nurtured by the revelation that there really was someone called Arthur living at the same place around the same time. But whether we want facts to intrude any further is a moot point. Legends like that of King Arthur often have greater power to influence us than real events. History's spin doctors have already done a pretty good job on him. The country is littered with monuments in the form of King Arthur's caves or King Arthur's stones each with their own local appeal. Maybe the myth and the man shouldn't come too close together. Sometimes truth needs to be kept at a distance — so memories can live on.

Letters to the Editor

New lads and other wets

I AM, by now, used to being dragged, on the most spurious of grounds, into stories about cronyism and New Labour. But I have to make a stand over Helen Wilkinson's implication that I am part of a "new lad" football-mad clique within the party (Faced with Labour's lads, August 6). As anyone who knows me will testify, I cannot have the game. I have never played it or watched it (even on TV). At last a twist to the cronygate scandal where my lack of involvement and therefore innocence is unquestionable. And surely an "own goal", as I believe it's called, for Wilkinson's rather ludicrous conspiracy theory. Derek Draper, London.

YOU refer to Heineken as "Dutch lager" and say Whitbread "distributes the lager in Britain" (Lager ad attempts to freshen up act, August 3). The Heineken sold in this country is not Dutch. It is brewed by Whitbread in Britain, as are Stella Artois, Murphy's Stout, Holsten Pils and other brands they try to pass off as imported to justify a high price. Stephen Hughes, Wirral, Merseyside.

GEORGE Wolfe (Letters, August 6) and Harry Esfield are both right. Both characters take their clothes off in the barn scene in Equus. I refer you to the film version, where the roles are taken by Peter Firth and (somewhat inevitably, for a British film of the era) Jenny Agutter. Tim Footman, Wallington, Surrey.

MAY I suggest that the Met Office amend their "comfort index" to include more typical British weather conditions? More appropriate would be: Slightly wet; Moderately wet; Extremely wet; and Absolutely soaking soaked. Catherine Lewis, Bristol.

HOW are regular letter-writers to reach the next peak, an extract at the top of the page? Montagu Bream, Chinnor, Oxford.

Feedback for Mr O'Brien

I AM a British citizen; my husband is an Algerian asylum-seeker. Mike O'Brien (It's better now, August 6) claimed there is no "culture of disbelief", I cannot agree. The Home Office presenting officer at my husband's asylum appeal made it quite clear that there is a total disbelief in any claim of potential threat to life from an Algerian — despite the well-documented atrocities which have occurred.

Mike O'Brien claims officials "constantly put to me recommendations for compassionate decisions". My husband's claim for compassionate consideration barely had sufficient time to touch the official's desk before being refused. The specifics of our relationship and the circumstances surrounding our marriage had received no consideration.

The attitude of immigration officials to asylum-seekers appears to be entirely based on the assumption that their only reason for seeking asylum is to receive free accommodation and claim benefits. My husband was a successful businessman in his own country with his own premises, home and car. He has never claimed any benefits or state accommodation. He considers it to be a great shame that he has been forced to apply for asylum, but he feels he has no choice because he has a genuine fear for his life, a fear demonstrated to me by

his constant nightmares. The final twist to this tale is that I am a Home Office employee. The situation remains that my employer expects me to leave my job, my country and family, and risk my life and my husband's by returning to Algeria for him to apply for re-entry to the UK as required by immigration rules. Is this compassion or fair and decent treatment? Name and address supplied.

MR O'Brien claims that the Refugee Legal Centre's high success rate at appeal is that it carefully selects the appellants it promotes. He states that the fairness of Home Office decision-making is demonstrated by the fact that only 6 per cent of appeals against their decisions are successful.

In fact, the RLC accepts instructions from asylum appellants on a first-come-first-served basis, regardless of merit. Nonetheless, our success rate in appeals cases this year is over 25 per cent.

Other competent representatives achieve similar success rates at appeal. And yet only 6 per cent of appeals are successful. The little research conducted in this area indicates that unrepresented appellants have a negligible chance of success. There is no legal aid for representation at appeal hearings. The burden of representing asylum appellants who cannot afford to pay for representation therefore

falls on the voluntary sector. The RLC is turning away 800 appellants a month because of a lack of resources. Chris Dwyer, Refugee Legal Centre.

THE root cause of the mess in the asylum system is that there are simply not enough caseworkers employed to process applications. This leads to backlogs and delays, encourages abuse in the system and means that the genuine applicant has to wait years for a decision. The modest increase in funding proposed by the asylum white paper will not come close to solving this problem. The "casework programme", a multi-million pound investment in computer equipment, is in serious difficulties and over a year behind schedule.

It is not Mr O'Brien's fault that contractual obligations with private suppliers have saddled him with a defective programme he inherited from the last government. But his efforts to remedy the pattern of crisis management in the Immigration and Nationality Directorate, involving almost every kind of initiative except the simple expedient of hiring more staff, have so far proved wholly ineffective. Not good news for genuine refugees and the staff who work there. Mike Moran, Andrew Fleming, Public and Commercial Services Union.

Both sides dig in over Kosovo

IT IS not only President Milosevic who is devious about Kosovo (Leader, August 5). The Government has recently declared that it will maintain military forces able to intervene effectively in international crises. But faced with the killing of women and children in Kosovo, the repeated breaking of undertakings by President Milosevic, and risk of an extension of war beyond the borders of former Yugoslavia, the Government continues to acquiesce in inaction. The consequences will not be confined to the 10 per cent

of the Albanian population of Kosovo already driven from their homes. The Government and EU are concerned to prevent the break up of Macedonia. But the Albanian minority of Macedonia will be inexorably drawn into the conflict if they witness the slaughter of the Albanian majority of Kosovo, while the democracies do nothing. Richard Moore, London.

IT IS the KLA that is responsible for the escalation of the conflict in Kosovo this year.

initially by attacking police and kidnapping and murdering civilians (both Serbian and Albanian) and, more recently, by forcibly taking control of large areas of land.

The KLA is a nationalist organisation whose goal is to create an ethnically pure Greater Albania, incorporating not only Kosovo but parts of Macedonia and Montenegro as well. It has chosen to abandon the rule of law and adopt the law of the jungle. So long as the possibility of Western intervention exists the KLA will have good reason to choose war over negotiations. George Tintor, London.

reply "could you wait a minute", knowing that I trained for, to have to cut corners, compromise my standards and leave a dying man in a unseemly bed.

His wife, in her distress, screamed at me that I was "not doing my job properly". She was telling me what I'd known for some time. I left.

Nurses are not leaving the health service purely because of the meagre salary they receive. They leave because they are unable to provide an acceptable level of care and treatment, through inadequate staffing levels — and this is prior to the current shortage of nurses. Louise Leach, Brighton.

Don't nurse any hopes we'll return to the health service

THE Secretary of State for Health has announced additional funding for the NHS, part of which will be used to employ an extra 15,000 nurses (Pay in full promise to nurses, August 5). Good news, one might think. But ever since this announcement was made, I have experienced an anxiety dream which would like to share with you.

Full of naive optimism, I accept Frank Dobson's kind invitation to return to work as a staff nurse in my former hospital. Within seconds, however, I am struggling to cope. I have a ward full of sick patients in need of blood transfusions, IV drugs, CVP monitoring and so forth, all of which I am trying to manage on my own because I am the only qualified nurse on duty.

If my patients need any more than that, such as a kind word or a sympathetic ear, they will be disappointed because I am no longer even trying to be a good nurse.

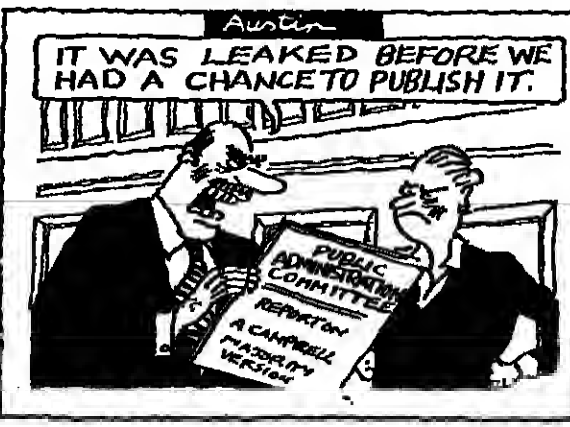
The situation on my ward is not only desperate, it is dangerous, and the best I can do is run around like a headless chicken trying to ensure that none of my patients has an accident or receives the wrong treatment when my back is turned, while praying that most of them will remain alive and safe — at least until I have gone off duty.

Fortunately, I usually wake up fairly quickly, and remember that I resigned from the NHS almost three years ago. I cannot believe that Mr Dobson is a stupid person, but he seems to believe that I am.

In order to entice me to return to crisis-managing the health service, Mr Dobson has made the very generous offer of an extra £7.50 (on average) in our weekly wage packets. All I can say is, "Thank again, Mr Dobson!" Patricia Barden, London.

As a staff nurse working on a 26-bedded acute medical ward, with the support of two junior student nurses, I was approached by the wife of a patient: her husband, unconscious and dying, was lying on a urine-soaked bed. She wanted us to change his linen.

Unfortunately, there was a queue of similar requests, each equally deserving of an immediate response. As was so frequently the case, I had to



Lambeth lambasted

MADEIRA Bunting has had some fun at the expense of the Anglican episcopacy (Unholy and unreal, August 6), but she has not put her finger on what should be the real business of Lambeth. In the last century, the XIII. If the bishops have done some serious Bible study, should they not be confessing the collective guilt of Christianity and admitting that the word of God, in a selection of myths which bear little resemblance to reality?

The one chance Canterbury has to wrongfoot Rome (which once ordained me) is to be honest and truthful, as it was in the 1930s over contraception. Now that we know the history of the universe, the facts of evolution and DNA, and the circumstances in which the books of the Bible were written and selected, the time has come to own up.

Christianity is a fraud. European history is largely a record of the atrocities its argumentative and divided followers perpetrated. We, who once believed, apologise to the memories of the people called heretics, witches and dissenters. The cathedrals should be made over to English Heritage.

Acid response

IN the profile of Irvine Welsh (The Scstasy and the agony, July 25), Andy Beckett alludes to two of my books, Getting High, The Adventures of Oasis, and The Greatest Footballer You Never Saw, The Robin Friday Story.

Apparently, "Welsh's praise rang from cover to cover, amplifying a matter of minority interest into something worth noticing". I can only assume that prior to interviewing Irvine, the writer ingested a few acid tabs, obliterating his eyesight.

Neither of the book's covers carry an endorsement from Irvine and deliberately so. Although in each case Irvine offered to supply a quote I turned him down. I felt there were too many books using his name to attract buyers. Instead, I placed a quote from him on the inside of the Oasis book (paperback edition) and was honoured when he wrote a forward for the Robin Friday bio.

If Mr Beckett believes the Oasis story is a matter of "minority interest", then I send my sympathies and suggest he get back on the LSD. Pronto. Paolo Hewitt, London.

Another Shayler brother rallies to the cause

LORD Williams, commenting on the actions of my brother, David Shayler (Letters, August 5) states that "These publishing liberties... can also risk lives". I understand that the objectives of the security services are to ensure the security of Great Britain and its inhabitants, but surely my brother's comments have in no way jeopardised any lives? He has criticised the inefficiency of MI5, the low morale, excessive drinking and bungled operations.

Surely it is this ineptitude that has placed the lives of innocent people at risk, not my brother's revelations which would cause real damage to national security". My brother's revelations have never risked national security — they have merely brought into the public consciousness how the inefficiency of MI5, the accusations were indeed true. However, the Government requested that David be extradited from his own home in France and he now languishes

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Nine months that will make or break Brown

Treasury mandarins hold key to the Chancellor's success, writes **Larry Elliott**

THE list of Chancellor who have made the fatal error of believing Treasury forecasts is a long and illustrious one. Nigel Lawson was told by his number crunchers there would be no boom in 1988. There was. Norman Lamont was informed almost daily in 1991 that recovery from recession was just around the corner. It wasn't.

So, when Gordon Brown says he is confident that his Treasury mandarins have got it right and that the economy will enjoy a soft landing over the next year or so, there has to be a risk that Labour's first occupant of 11 Downing Street in almost two decades will be the latest victim of Whitehall over-optimism.

But, as he starts his summer break in Cape Cod, Mr Brown remains utterly convinced that the decisions he has taken in the 15 months since arriving at the Treasury have put Britain on the road to a stable economy that can deliver faster growth, more jobs and higher living standards. Thus: "We are breaking away from 40 years of boom-bust, the days of 15 per cent interest rates and odd years of strong growth but where we are unable to enjoy the sustained growth other countries have achieved because we haven't tackled the underlying and structural weaknesses in the economy."

To which the sceptic would reply, à la Mandy Rice-Davies, that you would say that, wouldn't he? There is certainly no shortage of people who believe that the Chancellor has got it all spectacularly wrong.

But they are in a minority and, for the time being, their voices are muted. Wounded by the row over single-parent benefits, Mr Brown bounced back last month with the announcement of big increases

in health and education spending over the next three years.

And the man who really matters, the Prime Minister, believes that Mr Brown's long-term strategy is exactly what Britain needs after the frenetic roller-coaster ride of the past quarter-century.

The next nine months will be pivotal, both for the economy and for the Chancellor's reputation. If the economy can survive the winter without sliding into recession, Mr Brown will emerge as the hero who puts Tony Blair on course for a second term. If the landing is hard rather than soft, the Chancellor will be the villain of the piece.

In an end-of-term interview with the Guardian, Mr Brown was upbeat. "My forecasts at the time of the pre-Budget report in November, the Budget in March and at the time of the public spending announcements have proved to be in line with what the economy is doing," he said.

"What I said last year was that there would be a justifiable and necessary slowdown in the economy this year to achieve the stability we need for sustained growth and jobs. I am confident that we are on track to avoid recession. We are forecasting 2 per cent growth this year and 1.75 per cent next year. The economy is performing as we expected it to do."

The strategy is that giving the Bank the power to set interest rates makes monetary policy more credible and less politically-charged. Inflation would be lower, leading to lower interest rates and higher investment. With the Government acting to tackle skills bottlenecks and Britain's productivity gap, the result will be enhanced economic performance.

"Making the Bank of England independent, with an open and accountable regime,

and setting up a fiscal regime based on published rules have created the possibility of long-termism for the first time in 40 years."

Yesterday, to sighs of relief all round, the Bank left interest rates on hold at 7.5 per cent. Asked how he would have voted had he been a member of the nine-strong Monetary Policy Committee, the Chancellor says it would not be right for him to comment on individual decisions by the committee. However, despite mounting criticism from industry and the unions that the Bank is out of touch with the real world and risks pushing the economy into recession by keeping interest rates too high, his faith in the new system is undimmed.

"We have got to move from the short-termism of parts of growth followed by deep recessions to a more steady pattern," Mr Brown said.

"When I set up the Monetary Policy Committee, I said: 'We are breaking away from 40 years of boom-bust, the days of 15 per cent interest rates and odd years of strong growth, but where we are unable to enjoy the sustained growth other countries have achieved'."

The main criticism from the new Shadow Chancellor, Francis Maude, is that Mr Brown has got fiscal policy all wrong, and that the failure to raise taxes on consumers more aggressively in July last year and the 2.75 per cent increase in public spending for the last three years of the Parliament have meant higher-than-necessary interest rates. "Monetary and fiscal policy are more closely co-ordinated now than when they were under the control of one person," Mr Brown said.

"The Conservative attacks are a bundle of contradictions. On the one hand they say I have taxed too much; on the other that I have taxed too little."

"Fiscal tightening has been greater than anybody ever thought it would be when we came into power last May. We have held to the public spending totals for two years and taken action to reduce the deficit. There has been a £20 billion fiscal tightening,

the objectives of our economic policy were high levels of growth and employment. I back the Bank's decisions 100 per cent."

Although there has been criticism of the new decision-making process, not many people are suggesting returning to the old ad hoc and highly personalised system of setting rates. It was a great pity the Bank wasn't made independent six months before the last election.

The Chancellor rejects accusations that the Bank is stuffed full of ivory tower academics. "The people chosen have a good knowledge of the economy. The Bank is building up regional expertise and its court is now more representative of the regions."

With the Tories transfixed by their crushing election defeat, the Chancellor has had a pretty easy ride from the Opposition.

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the biggest since 1981."

The Chancellor says that the rapturously-received increases in health and education spending were evidence that the new approach to the economy was paying off. "We are proving by what we are doing that there is no conflict between policies to promote stability and policies to invest in good and strong public services," he said.

"Under the Tories the prevailing philosophy was that you could be prudent but only by cutting public services. Or that you could invest but only by being imprudent. That is an artificial dichotomy."

What could go wrong to spoil the Chancellor's plans for long-term stability? There are three obvious contenders.

The first is pay, which is being closely monitored by the Bank, amid fears that rising earnings growth will prompt a renewed wage-price spiral.

"There is a risk on interest rates if we take pay rises that can't be afforded," Mr Brown said. "I don't think people realised at first that there is a different world now. In the past the inflation target did not matter. In the new world it can and will be met, either by wage responsibility or by

higher interest rates."

The second flashpoint could be the knock-on effects of the Asian crisis, which could make a nonsense of everybody's economic forecasts if it is transformed from a regional into a global crash. "We need to be highly vigilant during the coming year as the calls for protectionism will start," Mr Brown said.

Finally, there is the risk that the good old British economy is simply impervious to everything policy makers throw at it, and continues to be stuck in a low-growth, low-productivity trap. Having made welfare the centre-piece

of this year's Budget, next year's package is being designed to tackle Britain's productivity shortfall.

Mr Brown says it will include measures to reform labour markets, capital markets, and to boost investment and innovation. "We need more enterprise, more investment, more attention to productivity," he said.

This will not be achieved overnight and the strategy will take at least two terms to bear fruit. But the second term will materialise only if the Treasury whizz-kids have got their sums about the next nine months right.

Interest rates 'have reached peak'

Mark Atkinson
Economics Correspondent

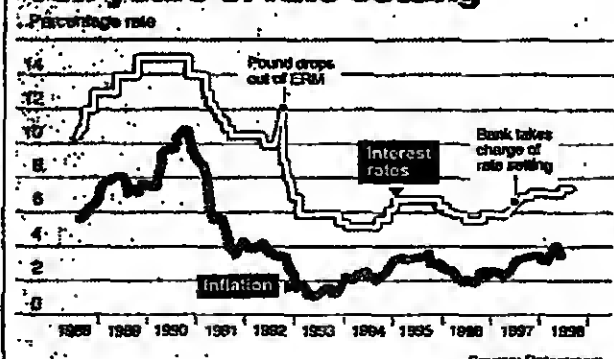
INTEREST rates appeared to have peaked yesterday when the Bank of England's monetary policy committee left the cost of borrowing on hold as a Confederation of British Industry survey showed the slowest growth in retail sales for three years.

With evidence accumulating that growth is slowing and helping to contain inflationary pressure, analysts said chances of a further rate increase from the current level of 7.5 per cent were remote.

However, fears of triggering a sharp slide in the value of the pound, which could unleash a wave of import price rises, would ensure that next week's quarterly assessment of the inflation outlook by the MPC would remain relatively hawkish.

According to the CBI, 37 per cent of retailers said

Ten years of rate setting



sales volumes were up on a year ago, while 31 per cent said they were down. The difference between those reporting growth and those who said sales had declined was 19 per cent in June and 25 per cent in May.

"The further slowdown in retail sales growth suggests consumers have been discouraged by a combination of high interest rates

and bad weather," said the CBI's Alastair Kyrion.

"The message of this survey is consistent with the balance of other data in indicating a slower pace of domestic demand. A further rise in interest rates would risk a much sharper slowdown than necessary to contain inflation."

Sterling eased slightly in the wake of the Bank's decision.

Analysts said the key question for the MPC is likely to be how quickly the pound falls. If it slides down gently as slowing growth creates slack in the economy, it is unlikely to present much of an inflationary risk.

But if it crashes before the slowdown has really taken hold, the MPC may be forced to push up rates again to secure the Government's 2.5 per cent inflation target.

The sky falls on the silicon chip

The licence to print money has run out for the semiconductor industry. **Mark Milner, Nicholas Bannister and Geoffrey Gibbs** report

FORECASTING is like forgetting your telephone number and then trying to estimate it, a senior executive of a leading semiconductor manufacturer once said.

Siemens would testify to the truth of this. The German company's north Tyneside plant is facing closure and its semiconductor division is on course for a loss this year of more than £1 billion (£857 million).

NEC of Japan is cutting back investment spending globally and South Korea's Hyundai has mothballed a new plant in Scotland.

Back in 1986 one of the industry's most respected forecasters was predicting annual sales by this year of some \$200 billion (£126.5 billion). The figure is likely to be nearer \$140 billion. Thousands of Newcastle upon Tyne workers are set to pay the price for this with their jobs.

For some chips, the price has collapsed amid allegations of Korean manufacturers dumping the product at extremely low prices. Yet two years ago, says one industry observer, "a semiconductor plant was a licence to print dollars."

Boom has turned to bust and Britain has taken a heavy hit. The UK has more than its share of semiconductor plants — more than 30. Most are relatively small and the majority foreign-owned.

The list of foreign investors includes America's Motorola and National Semiconductor and Japan's NEC and Fujitsu.

Scotland's Silicon Glen, the biggest grouping of factories, contains some of the best known names in the industry, including computer makers Compaq and IBM, and chip makers Motorola and NEC.

Siemens and Hyundai are now looking for buyers for their newly-built UK plants. Another Korean giant, LG, confirmed yesterday that it is pressing ahead with its £1.3 billion state-of-the-art computer chip factory in Newport, South Wales, expected to employ up to 1,000 people by December 1999.

"The Welsh plant is our first manufacturing venture outside Korea and remains a top priority," said an LG spokeswoman. "Our plans are unchanged." Directors are determined to build a European

bridgehead. While foreign companies flourished until now, Britain has failed to create a home-grown semiconductor or computer industry. It participates largely through the largesse of foreign companies which took advantage of inward investment incentives.

ICL, created by the Labour government in the late 1980s to be the flagship of a British computer industry, is now in Japanese hands. Sir Peter Bonfield, the bright executive who ran it in recent years, left to run British Telecom.

The failure of ICL to fulfil its destiny accounts in large measure for Britain's second-class status in the league of hi-tech nations. A generation of UK managers noted ICL's high hopes and heavy losses, and fought shy of an industry with a prodigious capacity to swallow money.

For example, Immos, the South Wales company which developed the revolutionary computer on a chip, failed to find adequate UK backing and

was taken over by SGS-Thomson, the Franco-Italian semiconductor group. Making semiconductors is capital, rather than labour, intensive. A modern plant — known as a fab — now costs up to \$2 billion, yet will only employ about 2,000 people. The bulk of the cost is in equipment.

The lines on a computer chip are now so fine — about one four-hundredths of a human hair — that a tiny speck of dust or flake of skin caught in the manufacturing process can ruin it. Manufacturing takes place in clean rooms where the air is replaced every six seconds.

"People are the biggest source of contamination," said a spokesman for Intel, the world's largest maker of computer chips. "Our clean rooms are a thousand times cleaner than the finest hospital operating theatres."



Closure threatens jobs at the Siemens plant on north Tyneside

first, built in 1984, cost \$1 billion. The second, built four years later, cost \$1.5 billion. Wafers of chips are sent around the world to where workers are cheaper for the more labour-intensive work of mounting the individual chip in a ceramic case, with appropriate connections.

Advanced chips, like Digital's super-fast Alpha microprocessor, can take up to three months to make. But years can be spent developing a chip, frequently at costs reckoned in hundreds of millions of pounds. Intel, for example, is reckoned to spend about a third of its annual \$2.5 billion research budget on developing new microprocessors.

One manufacturer had a design team of 50 working for three years on a chip which never made production.

Bullish Brown... But has he made a fatal error?
PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ARGLES

Make or break time for Brown, page 15

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FinanceGuardian

Household appliances not insured as year 2000 is a foreseeable risk

No cover for millennium bug

Lisa Buckingham
City Editor

HOMEOWNERS were warned yesterday that household appliances that fail because of the millennium bug will not be covered by insurance. The Association of British Insurers said: "Losses which occur as a direct result of the millennium bug will not be insured since it is a predictable and foreseeable event."

It is estimated that three quarters of the homes in the country — 21 million separate properties — have some form of contents insurance. But householders will not be able to claim for equipment such as personal computers, video recorders, microwave ovens, security or even central heating systems suddenly stops working at midnight 1999.

The warning follows a similar bulletin late last year to

industry to which the insurance sector said it would refuse to pay if UK businesses could not function because of millennium breakdowns.

Mark Boleat, director general of the ABI, told consumers: "Insurance is designed to cover the unpredictable and unforeseen. The millennium is neither — although some of the consequences may be. And it is these unpredictable

and unforeseeable events which some insurance policies will cover."

The insurers say they are unlikely to pay if:
● a car malfunctions because of a millennium-related defect;
● a holiday is cancelled or delayed;
● equipment covered by extended warranty policies stops working.

Although the exclusions and policy wordings vary from insurer to insurer, most of the reputable companies will pay up when millennium-related failures result in knock-on damage.

For example, if a microwave oven blows up because its chip fails at the millennium that will not be covered. But if that explosion causes a fire which burns down the

house then the insurance policy will provide cover. The start from the ABI came as one of its leading members, Royal & Sun Alliance, warned that the confrontation between insurers and the public over millennium-related cover could create as much public hostility for the industry as the pensions mis-selling crisis.

The government-backed

Action 2000 accused some insurers of acting "unreasonably and obdurate in their authority". Gwyneth Flower, managing director of Action 2000, said: "As far as I am concerned, where an individual can show they have taken due care and responsible action to try to address the millennium problem then their insurance should remain wholly in force."

She applauded the efforts of some insurers to alert consumers to the limits of cover and to make allowances for policyholders who demonstrate that they have tried to minimise any problems.

"I'm not going to let this go," she said. "I understand that they don't want to expose themselves to unreasonable risks and people might have to agree to pay a bit more but I would hope we could persuade the insurance sector to come up with a coherent set of general principles behind their approach."

Notebook

One depression is quite enough



Edited by
Mark Milner

IN terms of the global economy, yesterday's decision by the Bank of England's monetary policy committee is hardly earth-shattering. It may even fail to offer a reprieve to those parts of the economy which have suffered, though hardly in silence, from the strength of the pound.

But if the MPC's deliberations have, as yet, failed to produce the substantive response some of its critics would have liked, the decision may yet become symbolic. In a week during which stock markets on both sides of the Atlantic have suffered from a head attack of nerves, the sight of policy makers almost anywhere jacking up interest rates would be unwelcome to investors.

We will have to wait for another six weeks before we know whether or not the MPC actually looked at events in the equity markets in London and on Wall Street. The US Federal Reserve, however, may not have the luxury. Wall Street is growing ever more jittery. The outlook for corporate earnings simply does not justify the US market's rating. Even that most bullish of bulls, Prudential Securities' Ralph Acampora, has turned sour on the market. Second line stocks, he argues, are already in a bear market. Blue chips are set to follow.

Even if Mr Acampora is right, it does not follow that the sky will fall in on Wall Street. But there must be a significant risk that reassessment will easily turn into rout. If that happens policy makers (the Fed) will have to act.

The two great market meltdowns in history — 1929 and 1987 — have produced diametrically opposite policy responses. After the first, interest rates were raised and the US rushed into the Depression, dragging quite a bit of the rest of the world along with it. After the second, policy makers looked at what had happened previously and kept rates down and liquidity up. That was not without its economic downside. In Britain, for example, it helped to fuel

what later became known as the Lawson boom. Given the choice, however, most of us know which we would prefer. The Grapes of Wrath needs only one reading. It is to be hoped the Fed's Alan Greenspan (and the MPC for that matter) has already got the message.

Reasonable risk

INSURANCE companies are not there to be fleeced whenever possible. They are certainly within their rights to try to make sure they are not exposed to unreasonable risks.

And it is little wonder that, faced with a once in a millennium catastrophe of quite unknowable proportions, their reluctance should be palpable.

Common sense suggests that responsible business will try to put their own millennium-bug problems in order in reasonable time. It would simply not be in the interests of a major bank, for example, to alienate millions of customers while chortling on about how the corporate insurance policy would pick up the tab.

Homeowners are a rather different case. It will be a huge task for them to get in touch with the manufacturers of the entire range of domestic appliances in order to assess whether they have chips and, if so, whether they are year-2000 compliant.

If they do so, however, and record the attempts made to eliminate potential trouble spots and pass a report on to the insurer, then policyholders should have the right to expect that their insurer will not refuse to write the risk. There may be a price for that cover and some homeowners will not want to pay more. But they should be given the option.

Read Elsevier, however, has come up with an entirely new version of post-merger boardroom musical chairs. It has decided that it would be better if it united its two management boards under a single chief executive.

Royal says firms are hiding exclusion

ROYAL & Sun Alliance is losing substantial business to rival insurers who are hiding the fact that policies do not cover millennium bug losses, writes Lisa Buckingham.

Paul Spencer, Royal's finance director, said: "A lot of companies are staying silent. We are losing busi-

ness to them because they are not being clear."

He warned that the insurance industry could be inundated with claims in early 2000 which would be disputed.

Mr Spencer said: "Millennium-related claims have the potential for a very long wrangle which will be very damaging for the in-

dustry. It is far better to have those arguments up front."

He said that the leading firms were already behaving properly; but there were difficulties with some of the smaller or foreign companies and a number of overseas markets.

His warning came as Royal unveiled a drop in

first-half operating profits from £501 million to £305 million, after incurring more than £125 million of weather-related losses stemming from ice storms in Canada, El Niño, the January storms and Easter flooding.

He denied the group was under pressure to mount a block-buster acquisition.

Developer's scheme on course

Wiggins gambles on race track for the City

Tony May

AFTER the rat-race, the horse race. The Wiggins property development group plans to build a new racecourse in east London expressly for jaded City and West End business types and their clients.

After a hard day selling sterling or property, Wiggins wants them to hop on the Central Line or nip along the M25 or M11 motorways to its proposed £100 million development at Fairlop Waters in the London borough of Redbridge. On 320 acres, it proposes three oval racecourses: one dirt and two grass — one flat and one for jumping.

A programme of 70 fixtures a year, half of them mid-week and a large number floodlit, is envisaged and the Horseracing Board and Jockey Club are being consulted.

City slickers could fly in clients from overseas to the City of London airport, put them up at the proposed five-star hotel — or at the other, budget hotel if there is a recession — offer tickets for the proposed leisure centre with multiplex cinema then entertain them at the racetrack after dinner at the restaurant.

That, at least, is the vision. Wiggins says the London business market has indicated that it will be extremely keen to be involved with its project in terms of both sponsorship



A day at the races... the Wiggins group plans to attract City slickers to east London

PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

and patronage. It argues that the sport — which is struggling to attract new money — will benefit from an influx of racegoers and says other courses will not suffer.

Geoff Lansbury, who is running the project for Wiggins said: "We plan to offer the London businessman a unique opportunity while providing the enormous local

market with racing on their doorstep."

The planning process has only just begun, however. At present the site is part of a 1,000-acre park complete with lake, nature reserve and adventure playground.

Wiggins is promising that none of the facilities will be affected and that some kind of golfing activity will be retained when the present

course disappears beneath the racetrack. The leisure and racing facilities will be used by the local community, the company says, and 1,000 new jobs will be created.

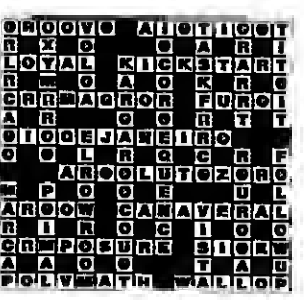
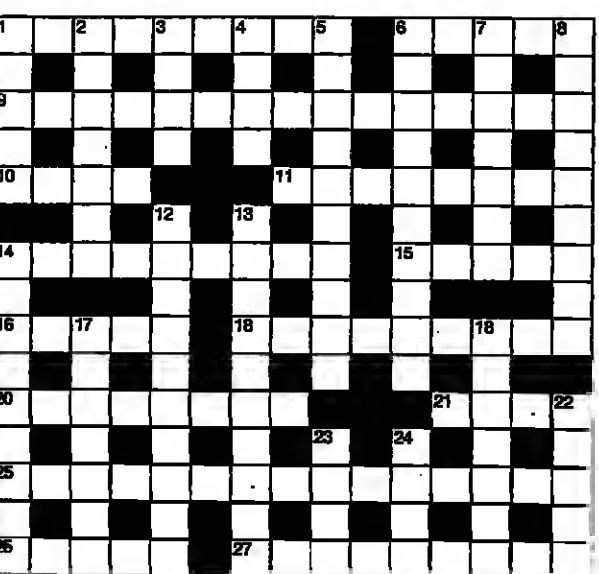
A rival plan by Arena, which owns the Lingfield and Folkestone racecourses, to build an all-weather track at Thurrock in Essex is not seen as a threat, as the Wiggins plan also includes grass

courses, which should appeal to the racing authorities, and has tube links which should appeal to the punters. Arena does already have agreed racing fixtures, however.

A planning application will not be made until a traffic and environmental impact assessment is completed but Wiggins hopes to start construction next year with the first race pencilled in for late 2000.

Guardian Crossword No 21,347

Set by Audreus



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,346

Across

- 1 Tales told off a duetbin, turning over contents: by such was Wordsworth inspired? (9)
- 6 Heading for spring (5)
- 9 Outcome unpredictable when one is sworn to secrecy (3,5,3,4)
- 10 Number of French in a little knot (4)
- 11 Who said loudly: "Place a bet"? (Heard on the racetrack) (8)
- 14 Shrub to be processed. It's for hay (9)
- 18 Evaluate a continental strand (5)
- 19 Precipitation sounds to be the rule (5)
- 18 A pound for the pen? (9)
- 20 One holds firm, and youth gets the honour (8)
- 21 Be next to return the instrument (4)
- 22 Business getting behind; hell what a muddle (15)
- 26 Lament, for example, taking tree turn (5)
- 27 Dynamic backing for Geordie: land work unit; call around (9)

Down

- 1 Scottish grandchild discovered in the sanctum sanctorum of a senior member (5)
- 2 Nothing in the cash dispenser maybe? — Be sunk (7)
- 3 Comply with address to the old governor (4)
- 4 In the same place as former goat (4)
- 5 Strangely seems a cat that must not be professed (10)
- 6 Patron leaning outside snook bar upset the soldiers (10)
- 7 Be not so profligate, it doesn't work (7)
- 8 Crockery dealer crazy about little feet on women (8)
- 12 Elgar bandy? Possibly, all things considered (2,3,5)
- 13 Too often used to walk around hospital undressed (10)

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Transatlantic deal for Ocean

Ben Laurence

BRITAIN'S Ocean Group is poised to unveil a major deal in the US. The company is expected today to give details of a take-over to expand its air-freight forwarding operations.

The group will announce the acquisition of a Texas-based company, Skyking Freight Systems. News of the deal comes little more than a week after Ocean announced a tie-up with Caliber Logistics of the US, which handles ground-based freight movements.

Ocean, which last month unveiled a 14 per cent rise in half-year profits, has been trying for months to tie up a deal which would strengthen its businesses in North America. The group, which already makes roughly half its profits from "international logistics management" — overseeing the movement of goods

around the world for multinational clients — was yesterday understood to be putting the finishing touches to the Skyking deal. An announcement is likely this morning.

Skyking arranges airfreight within the US. It specialises in meeting the needs of companies which are prepared to pay a premium in order to move goods quickly and reliably round the country.

The business will be dovetailed with Ocean's existing operations handling goods to and from the US.

The announcement is likely to show that Ocean is paying \$8 million (£5 million) straight away for Skyking. A further \$16 million will be paid in 13 months time.

On top of that, the UK group is expected to pay another \$10 million in the future, the exact amount being dependent on Skyking's performance over the next five years.

Ocean refused to comment yesterday.

Dome may hinder Mandelson's new job

Tony May and Simon Bewley

PETER Mandelson admitted last night that he had been forced to take special legal advice to ensure his links with businesses backing the Millennium Dome would not prevent him from carrying out his new duties as Trade and Industry Secretary. He said that he might have to stand aside in some cases.

The admission slipped out last night as Mr Mandelson made his first high-profile intervention: releasing a ruling on the alliance between American Airlines and British Airways. BA is one of the biggest sponsors of the £758 million Dome.

Although Mr Mandelson has been assured by senior civil servants that he is free to act in cases involving Dome sponsors, the revelation will cause consternation coming so soon after the recent "cash for contracts" crisis.

Mr Mandelson has maintained his role overseeing the Dome. He acts as sole

shareholder for the New Millennium Experience Company. His involvement is highly sensitive as given the fact that other sponsors of the Dome cover nearly every sector of the economy.

BA has pledged £6 million to the Dome; the airport operator BAA, £4 million; BT, Tesco, Manpower and BSKYB, £12 million. British Aerospace has said it will back the project but has given no figure. The Government hopes to sign up 60 business backers.

Referring to the BA case, Mr Mandelson said: "I have considered my position very carefully... and after taking advice from the permanent secretary of my department on the legal position, I am satisfied that I can exercise my responsibilities properly."

He conceded future competition cases would need careful handling. "I shall consider any further competition cases involving companies associated with the dome with similar care and shall stand aside if I cannot act, and be seen to act, fairly and impartially."

The revelation came as Mr Mandelson published the latest advice from the Office of Fair Trading on the hotly-contested alliance between BA and AA on which he will have the final say.

The OFT advised that the companies should comply with conditions set out by the European Commission last month or face a referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

John Bridgeman, Director General of Fair Trading, believes the companies should be encouraged to sell off up to 287 weekly take-off and landing slots at Heathrow and Gatwick, while the commission has said the slots should be given up without compensation.

Another point in BA's favour is that the OFT wants the BAA/AA alliance treated like any other venture between two carriers. The regulatory authorities have spent nearly two years considering this key alliance and the process could continue into 1999 — when the Millennium Dome opens for business.